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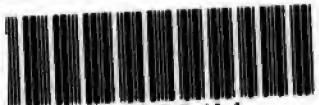
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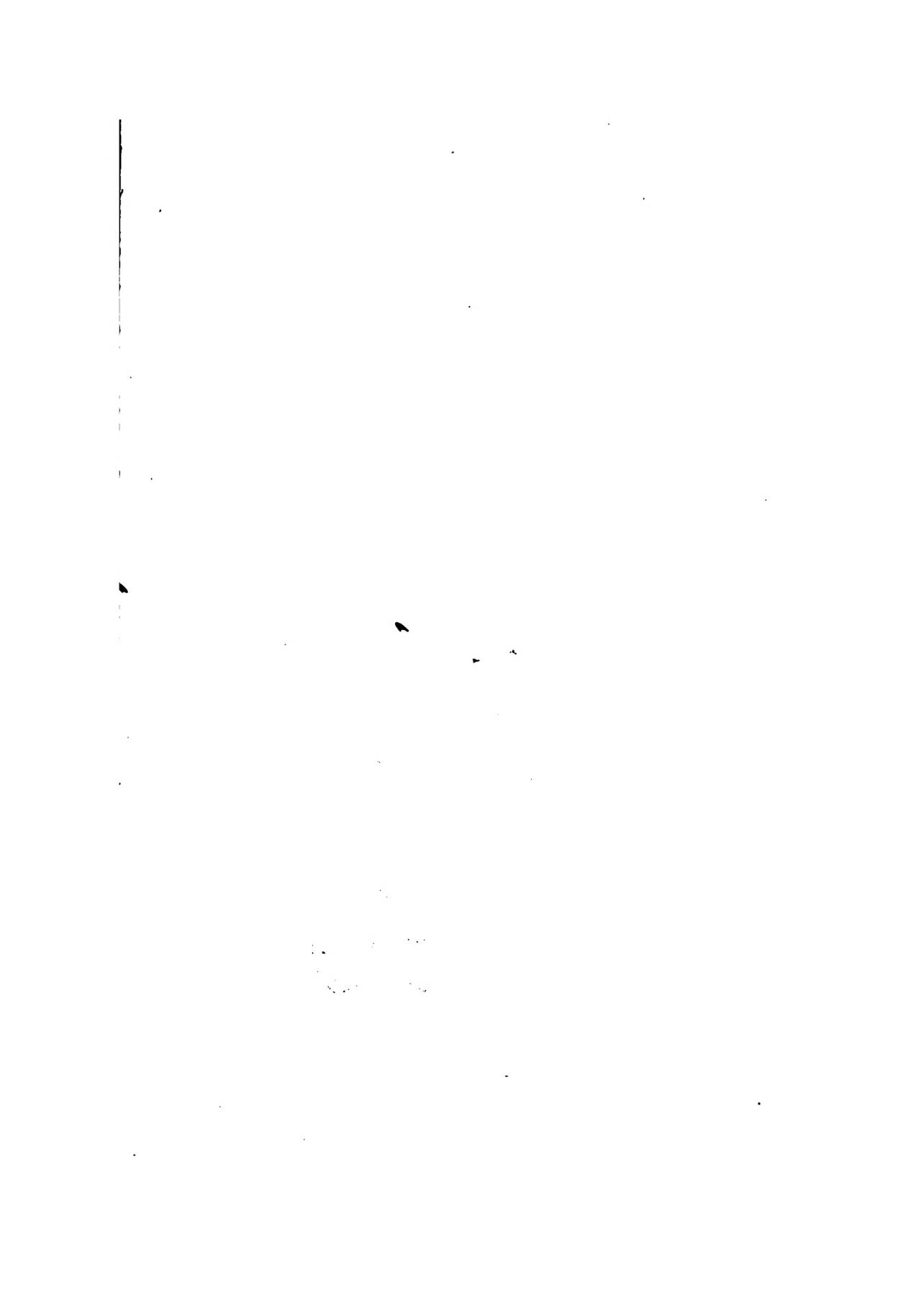
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SIX MONTHS IN MECCAH.



SIX MONTHS IN MECCAH:

*AN ACCOUNT OF THE MOHAMMEDAN PILGRIMAGE
TO MECCAH.*

RECENTLY ACCOMPLISHED BY AN ENGLISHMAN PROFESSING
MOHAMMEDANISM.

BY
T^E. F. KEANE.
(*Hajj Mohammed Amin.*)

"The first of the Pilgrims to Mecca and El-Medinah who has left an authentic account of the Holy Cities is Lewes Wertomannus (Ludovicus Bartema), gentelman, of the citie of Rome. 'If any man,' says this author, 'shall demand of me the cause of this my voyage, certeynely I can shewe no better reason than is the ardent desire of knowledge, which hath moved many other to see the world and the miracles of God therein.'”—Burton's *Pilgrimage*, Appendix II. First Edition. Longman. "The Navigation and Voyages of Ludovicus Vertomannus, gentelman, of Rome. A.D. 1508."



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PREFACE.

My object in the following pages is to give an account, in as short and inviting a manner as I can, of everything of interest that came under my notice while in Meccah, during the pilgrim season 1877-78; and chiefly for the benefit of those who may not have had the leisure, or perhaps inclination, to read the complete and exhaustive descriptions of the same scenes in the volumes of the well-known Swiss traveller, Johan Ludwig Burckhardt (Shaykh Hajj Ibrahim) and of the better-known learned traveller and author, Captain R. F. Burton (Shaykh Hajj Abdallah).

So, promising to make up for my lack of further prelude by what I only hope may not be deemed my too frequent interludes, I will with your permission proceed at once to "spin my yarn" in my own way.

J. F. KEANE (HAJJ MOHAMMED AMIN).



EXTRACT FROM *THE TIMES*, THURSDAY,
OCTOBER 23, 1879.

“I SHOULD strongly recommend to such of our countrymen as take a morbid delight in depreciating the power and influence of England to take a cruise in the Persian Gulf. If, as we are so constantly told, our word in the Councils of Europe counts for nothing, it is gratifying to see that at all events it stands for something in Asia; and that the Persian Gulf, for instance, in which we do not possess one yard of territory, is for all practical purposes an English lake. Such, indeed, is the case. The shores of the Gulf may actually be situated either in Turkey, Persia, or Arabia; but the one controlling power which keeps everything in order and in its proper place, which has put a stop to piracy, and enjoys the usufruct of peaceful trade, is this same effete, worn-out England: and all this good is effected without the smallest fuss and bluster, simply by the quiet action and influence of a few Englishmen, official and commercial, whose very names are unknown beyond the immediate sphere of their influence, and who are backed by no greater physical force than two or three of Her Majesty’s smallest gun-vessels and a single company of Sepoy Infantry.”

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SIX MONTHS IN MECCAH.

CHAPTER I.

MECCAH'S PILGRIMS.

Mecca's pilgrims, confident of Fate,
And resolute in heart!—LONGFELLOW.

THOUGH Mohammedans are divided into almost as many sects and schisms as Christians, they are all* agreed on one point, namely, that it is imperative on every Mohammedan who can afford it to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at some time in his life. And it is even considered obligatory on those who may have undertaken the pilgrimage during childhood to remake it when they become adult. This pilgrimage must be performed after prescribed rules and forms, and certain ceremonies must be gone through on the proper days of the year; consequently many thousands of Moham-

* Excepting a few barbarians, who can no more be called Mohammedan than some of the tribes of missionaries' pets in South Africa can be called Christian.

medans assemble at Meccah from all parts of the East during the pilgrim season, some of whom come in caravans across the Arabian deserts, while by far the greater number come by sea, giving employment to a number of English ships, and during the season of which I am writing 42,718 disembarked at Jeddah.* It was at this place that I was enabled to attach myself to the train of a youthful Hindit Amér,† whom I accompanied on pilgrimages to Meccah and other places in the Holy Land of Islam,§ and of my expedition to Meccah I shall now attempt to give some account.

On the first landing of these pilgrims at Jeddah, what struck me most was their helplessness and gullibility, for no party of English tourists in Egypt could have been more victimised than were the pilgrims by their brother Mohammedan touts and crimps

* "The British Consul at Jeddah states that in the season of 1877-78 there were 42,718 pilgrims landed at that port, an increase of nearly 4000 over the preceding year; but this was more than counterbalanced by the falling off in the numbers at Zembo and Leet. . . . The concourse at Meccah on the Great Feast-day was estimated to have exceeded 180,000 souls."—*The Times*, October 26th, 1878.

† Mohammedan native of India as distinguished from a Hindoo.

‡ Properly, and in this case really, a lord of the land under a ruler, and subject to feudal conditions.

§ The Hejaz.

of Jeddah. Before they landed a Turkish Custom-house official demanded one rupee a head on no apparent grounds whatever, and then, on landing, charged them a rather high duty on all their baggage, by weight, so that as most of the wealthier pilgrims bring almost sufficient food to last them during their stay in the country they get a pretty good foretaste of what is coming ere they are handed over to the native cicerones to undergo further extortion. Many of the wealthy pilgrims bring introductions to friends or countrymen resident in the Hejaz ; with these introductions my patron was well provided, and thus we secured a tolerably peaceful reception. I cannot describe polyglot Jeddah, as I was not there long enough to find out anything new or interesting about it. To the gentleman acting as British Consul I gave my name and the addresses of friends in England, informing him of my intentions. He said much to dissuade me, telling me the roads were in an unsafe state and the country rather disturbed on account of the withdrawal of Turkish troops to the war in Europe; but I had already made up my mind on the subject, and accordingly sold such of my clothes as would be unsuitable and provided myself with a native wardrobe ; then, after a three-days' rest in

Jeddah, I entered into the preparations of our party en route for Meccah. About noon on the third day, camels were hired from the Bedawins (the real sons of the Desert, as distinguished from their spurious brethren in Egypt, Palestine, and other countries generally visited by Europeans), whom I now met for the first time, and of whom, notwithstanding their wretched appearance at first sight, their haggling, and their shrill voices, I formed a favourable opinion, and still believe to have their good points. One conclusion I quickly arrived at: the "wily Hindi" would be no match for the "swarthy Paynim" in a "rough-and-tumble." After a great deal of hard swearing in a Babel of tongues, the camels were laden and got under way, and I, following the example of my companions, performed the greater ablution (i.e. the bathing of the entire person), and put on the pilgrim's garb, which consists of two pieces of white or light-coloured cotton fabric, one piece round the body over the left shoulder, leaving the right arm bare, the other round the loins, enveloping the body from the waist to below the knee (the head is left uncovered and the upper part of the foot bare), and then said a two-prostration prayer, which is a supplementary act of devotion

for special occasions. We afterwards joined our camels, which had become part of a larger caravan outside the walls of Jeddah. I had no difficulty in getting through the gate in the crowd, nor did I hear of any pass being required from the pilgrims, either here or at Meccah, though one may have been got for me by the Amér as Abdur Mohammed, the name I had adopted.

As we went through the gate two fine soldierly-looking Turkish sentries stood leaning on their rifles, smoking cigarettes, and seemed scarcely to notice even the camels passing them. Our party was composed of about fifty in all, men and women ; and, as only fifteen camels had been hired, ten with shugdufs, or litters, and five pack-camels (four of these latter with shibriyahs), and as each of these (the shugduf and the shibriyah) carries only two persons, about twenty of our party had to walk by the camels, in company with a number of fakirs, or beggar-pilgrims, who had attached themselves to us and who were accepted as a matter of course, receiving a great deal of charity in the shape of broken victuals and water, which latter has a money value in this country. I found I had to share a shugduf with one, of whom I shall often have to speak, since he was my camel-mate during the whole pilgrimage, and, as I intend, for reasons that

will readily suggest themselves to the reader, to suppress or translate all my companions' names, I shall call him (as I always thought of him), the "third warrior," the junior of the three armed retainers who formed the Amér's body-guard.

The kind of panniers or litters, in which we sat or lay at full length when riding, are known by the names of shugduf or shibriyah. Inside the shugduf is a pocket for food, tobacco, and other little necessaries; outside, at the tail end and within easy reach, a wicker-basket containing a bottle of water. Having mounted, that is to say, having, by the help of a ladder, ascended into this construction of bent boughs and old bags, resembling a rickety wigwam poised airily on the hump of a camel, the impression I laboured under was that we were instantly to plunge off in mad bounds across an exceedingly rough country, feeling at the same time pity for the poor beast under what I supposed could only have been an immense burden, spiced with momentary expectation of a spill. But on looking out I found the road a perfectly level sandy plain, the camel crawling along at a slow walk, jolting more than the fastest pace of the hardest trotting horse; moreover the platform on which you lay is on a level with the top of the animal's hump, and the whole structure of the shugduf so top-heavy that it requires

the nicest adjustment of weight on either side to prevent the saddle, to which the shugdūf is securely lashed (but which has no attachment whatever to the animal, merely adhering to its back in some mysterious way), turning a complete somersault—a thing which not unfrequently happens, for the art of balancing a shugdūf is only acquired after long practice. Our camel-driver threatened and abused us wildly for our awkwardness, my companion being as much a novice and as unaccustomed to this mode of travel as myself; however, we purchased peace at the price of a few dates and a little bread. I, for my part, spent one of the most wretched and apparently perilous nights I have ever had the misfortune to undergo, for the pitching and rolling of that desert-ship could not find its equal afloat; so that I, old sailor as I was, became exceedingly sick, a thing which had not happened to me for many years while at sea. The country over which we passed was a sandy plain, if anything, a slight ascent; our course, by the stars, nearly east; and the distance, I was informed, twenty-eight miles to Haddah, where we halted at daylight. Haddah is the stage, or half-way halting-place, between Jeddah and Meccah. Here there are about four or five square miles of cultivated ground, dotted over with groups of Bedawi huts. A stream of brackish water rises in

the north-east, and flows a mile or two over stone-built watercourses before losing itself in the desert. Around are what would be called the foot-hills of the approach to a range of mountains, the first outcropping of stone from the sandy plain, gradually increasing into rocky ridges and higher hills to the eastward. In the shade of a large shedlike caravanserai we spent the day, praying, eating, and resting; but sleep could not be got, for some of the more devout pilgrims kept up the "Talbiyat," or Pilgrim's Prayer :

Labbayk' Allahumma, Labbayk !
 La Sarika laka, Labbayk !
 Inna'l Handa wa'n Niamata laka w'al Mulk
 La Sharika laka, Labbayk !*

Imagine for yourself an unmusical old man of ninety, with his nose in a rat-gin, trying to sing at the top of his voice those words to the tune of "Silent, oh Moyle," or "The Sailor's Grave," for the first time in his life, and you will be able to faintly

* "Here I am ! O Allah ! here am I :
 No Partner hast Thou, here am I.
 Verily the Praise and the Beneficence are Thine, and the Kingdom :
 No Partner hast Thou, here am I."

Translation from "Burton's Pilgrimage." Third Edition.
 W. Mullan and Son. London, 1879.

realise the excruciating discord and ghastly contortions these pilgrims keep up for hour after hour while on their way to Meccah, to say nothing of many other almost equally disturbing devotional cries. I now found I could perform my ablution and prayer without attracting notice by any awkwardness on my part, audacious imitation giving me considerable help.

About an hour before sunset we got under way for Meccah ; after this the road became a more decided ascent, the hills around being higher and more rugged as we passed through rocky defiles in which the moaning of the camels and the labbayks of the pilgrims were echoed and re-echoed with a truly weird effect. At daylight, when we seemed to have reached the summit of a rocky platform, the increased intensity of the labbayks and the dismounting of those ahead told that "the Meccah" was in sight. The distance we had come from Haddah was about twenty miles, and the course still easterly. The approach to Meccah by this road does not give a good view of the town. You arrive among collections of high stone buildings scattered over rocky slopes, then dismounting—for it is the proper thing to enter Meccah on foot if possible, women and invalids only being excepted—you find yourself passing along rather wide streets, and between houses

of some height ; and as you continue on a downhill course the streets become more narrow and dirty towards the centre of the city, where a house had been prepared for us in the walks of the Haram or square enclosed for public worship, where is situated the Moslem Holy of Holies, the Kaabah.

Now here was I, a veritable "Britisher," looking through a plain iron-barred window, estimating the dimensions of that Mohammedan pivotal point of the world—"Hub of the Universe," the Kaabah, a shrine for which to die at hundreds of thousands stint and pauper themselves in their old age, and towards which millions of eyes from all points of the compass turn with reverence five times daily. But my calculating mood was soon cut short, for having established ourselves on the premises, there was no escaping the forms and ceremonies appropriate to the occasion, which, tired and weary as I felt, kept me going the whole day. Besides the usual everyday five prayers and ablutions, we had to perform a two-prostration prayer in one part of the Haram and another in another part ; to do the tawaf—i.e. walk, or rather trot, round the Kaabah seven times, kissing the Black Stone let into a corner of the building, and touching another stone in it, at every circuit ; to run seven times about one-third of a mile through the

streets repeating (after a guide hired for the purpose) proper prayers—this latter ceremony is called El-Sai, and is done in commemoration of Hagar's running up and down searching for water on the same spot. The street is in the middle of the city, skirting the Haram on the east, and crossing the valley of Mecca indirectly from side to side. Lastly, the head must be shaved. And now I was at liberty to take off the pilgrim's garb. My companions only shaved as much of the top of their heads as could be covered by a skull-cap, but I preferred, for reasons of cleanliness, to do all the shearing, moustache-clipping, and nail-paring of the most close-shaving Mohammedan, leaving my beard, the ends of my moustache, and two small locks under my temples, the only hair about me. The costume I assumed was a sort of mixture of Hindi and Turk, with perhaps as much of the Arab as of either in it. My headdress was a Turkish tarbouche, with a long silk handkerchief tied round it; on my feet the Hindi sandals, a strip of leather protecting the entire sole of the foot, and kept on by a band over the instep and down between the big and second toes; by way of breeches, a pair of Hindi cotton pyjamas, four feet round the waist and tight at the ankles; a tunic of the same material, girded about the loins with several folds of a cotton scarf;

and over all, when in the open air, an Arab-brown cloth mantle, having wide sleeves and reaching down to the ankles.

Right glad was I on this my first night in Meccah when we had said our last prayer and had laid down for the night to sleep, although the Amér and some thirty other "True Believers," packed head and tail in the same room, were snoring like pigs around me —yes, such was the thought, even the name of the unmentionable animal—literally unmentionable to all strict Mohammedans. Notwithstanding this impious thought my conscience did not prevent my sleeping soundly. Nor did I wake at the 2 A.M. meal—for this was the month Ramazan, when all food must be eaten between sunset and sunrise—but my well-meaning friends took sufficient interest in my spiritual welfare to turn me out for the morning prayer, for which service I appeared properly grateful, exhibiting a great deal of cheerful alacrity in the shape of a cold-water wash before sunrise on a chilly morning, and a quarter of an hour's gymnastic praying. One convenience was that the room in which we lived had three large recess windows looking straight into the Haram, so that we could see the Kaabah to which we prayed, and which is known as the "Ear of God" and by a dozen other flowery Eastern appellations, without

going out. Neither the Amér nor any of his superior retainers went into the arcades surrounding the Kaabah to pray except at noon on the Mohammedan Sunday, which falls on our Friday, and on a few other festive occasions. At first I always secured a place at these windows, not caring to show myself more in public than was necessary.

As this narrative is written chiefly for those who know little of Mohammedanism or Meccah, before going farther I will explain what this pilgrimage is, and endeavour to demonstrate my position in Meccah. I had often heard it said and myself believed that this great concourse of people which every year assembles at Meccah, ostensibly on a pilgrimage, really meets for a great mart or fair held there; but now having made the journey I know that this is not the case. It is a true pilgrimage, the outcome of a belief in the tenets of a religion, the commands of the Prophet. I think I might truly say that a very small minority go for temporal gain, though the majority do not go from disinterested motives (the devotion of love talked of by Christians playing a small part in Mohammedanism, so far as I have seen). The journey and hardship are undertaken professedly with an eye to the future, as believed to be necessary for the salvation of the soul from

the punishments and in the hope of the rewards promised in the Koran, and are, as I said before, the outcome of a wonderful and widespread belief, difficult to understand, and which could only exist among such races as imaginative miracle-mongering dwellers of the East. From this it will be understood that the community of Meccah is composed of the most bigoted Mohammedans, the fanatical scum of the whole Mohammedan world. Now, the precarious position of an unbeliever in any wholly Mohammedan town is well known; but let a Jew, Christian, or idolater approach to defile ground so holy and held in such veneration as is Meccah in the eyes of Mohammedans—ground of which many declare that should any but a True Believer stand on, it would open and swallow him—to say that he would be stoned to death, torn in pieces, burnt and his ashes sent out of the country, would only be repeating what I have heard Mohammedans declare. I am confident the life of a solitary white man refusing to make “profession of that faith” would not be worth an hour’s purchase—two hours outside the walls of Jeddah—even at this day: so that should any but a Mohammedan, from motives of curiosity, gain, or for adventure wish to enter the Hejaz, he must conform to the customs and

habits of a Mohammedan, and adopt great caution ; for, notwithstanding the security in which the majority affect to live, there are many jealous and inquisitive watchers, self-constituted spies, who would soon seal the fate of anyone suspected of insincerity. But let him be master of the thousand little signs and allusive phrases of Mohammedan Freemasonry, and let him affect minutely all observances and points of etiquette among Mohammedans, and sustain throughout a character for devotion, and he need fear no inconvenience on the score of his nationality in a place like Meccah. He may declare himself a Peckham Ryot, a native of Belgravia, or a country called North, as I have done, and he will meet with courteous, polite credence ; for there is so much dissembling and cunning in the Eastern character and respect for deceit that a Mohammedan will outwardly appear to believe a lie, in inverse proportion to its obvious untruth. I have told an Arab that I was by profession mate of a steamer, which must have seemed an imposition in such a poor wretch as I looked at the time, and he has immediately after, in my hearing, declared as a matter of fact that I was captain of a steamer, giving me my promotion out of compliment to what must have appeared to him the immensity

of my first crammer. All through I made assurance my strong suit and my acquaintance with India and hailing from Bombay my trump card; but if ever really cornered, as on one or two occasions, a little hand-play, implying that I was a recent convert, would in every case call forth nothing but approval and commendation. To undertake an expedition of this kind was certainly a wild and unscrupulous thing, and I suffered many qualms of conscience and felt the veriest hypocrite; but having once entered into it there was no drawing back and the ordeal had to be gone through, though I often at first longed to declare myself a humbug. I remember once hearing a sailor say to another: "You have told that lie so often, Jack, you believe it yourself." I now found this to be no impossibility. It became my case to a nicety, and in less than a month I was to all intents and purposes as honestly Mohammedan as any born Arab among them. I, in fact, acted that lie so well I believed it myself! The name I had adopted, the "Servant of the Prophet," though common in several forms in India, was objected to by the most correct of our party as not strictly orthodox, for, said they, was not Mohammed himself the servant of God? I thought this would be very inconvenient, as a cause of discussion bringing me into uncoveted

notice, and added "Amin" to the name I had already adopted, then dropping "the servant," by an easy transition I became known as "Mohammed Amin," a name which I supposed could not be objected to by any Mohammedans, no matter of what peculiar persuasion. Though I do not pretend but that I should be very much out of my depth were I to enter into any description of the discrepancies of belief existing among the various sects of the Mohammedans, still I do know more of Wahhabis than of the Wesleyans, and the Shafei is not altogether such a mystery to me as the Shaker; but I will spare the reader the infliction and myself the risk of exposure, having received probably much misinformation from so fertile a source as a Hindi one-sided education, and so I shall continue my narrative as the pilgrim Mohammed Amin, a Suni Mohammedan of the "reasonable class."

CHAPTER II.

IN MECCAH.

I WAS now settled in Meccah, living the ordinary everyday life of a pilgrim waiting for the "Great Pilgrimage." My ablutions were performed with the water of the well Zem Zem—Hagar's well in the wilderness, as tradition has it—and for appearance' sake I drank not a little of it, disagreeable as it was, being a mineral spring tasting like a weak solution of Epsom salts, and having a similar medicinal action. For each prayer said in Meccah, I was supposed to get credit for a thousand said elsewhere; still it is not desirable for any but the very devout to reside wholly in Meccah, as one's sins are multiplied in like proportion. I was not supposed to have any intercourse with my harem, if I had had one, nor to indulge in any feasting, sports, or amusements other than those allowable on religious

grounds. Fighting and the shedding of blood were especially to be abstained from, and killing of vermin, flies, worms, etc. were almost equally reprehensible, on account of the probability of offending a "djin"—a class of spirit which is believed to take this form and to be especially abundant in Meccah—and on account of the sanctity of all living things Meccan, whether "djins," men, or insects. I have heard a hot discussion as to the advisability of killing a human parasite, the slaughterer defending himself on the plea that the insect was undoubtedly of foreign extraction and but recently imported. My food consisted of the native diet of India, two meals of curry and rice a day, morning and evening, supplemented by such sweets, fruit, or tea as might be going in the household; for the rice I ate, no matter how much, never satisfied my cravings, it having, as far as my experience goes, much the same effect on a hungry man as salt water on a thirsty one. I sometimes went out into the streets and purchased bread from the Turkish soldiers, who sell their rations, and judging from the quality of their bread and the quantity they have to dispose of, they must be in clover here. After a week or ten days I found I could walk about the crowded bazaars without attracting notice, my fair complexion exciting no

curiosity among the chequered masses, nor my ignorance of Arabic giving me any inconvenience where so many nationalities were gathered, speaking more languages than I will stay to enumerate here, only mentioning that you may jostle against a Tartar, Malay, Negro, and Turk round any Hindi tea-stall. Nor does the style of your get-up make any difference, except that it is advisable not to be too "swell" in order to avoid attracting beggars, but otherwise the Archbishop of Canterbury doing the tawaf in his mitre and robes would not occasion a passing remark, and would be placed nowhere by twenty much more wondrously-attired figures. There was always something about that procession round the Kaabah that made me think of it as Madame Tussaud's male waxworks out for a walk—the many varieties of costume, the stolid expressionless faces and the peculiar Tussaud complexion, were all there.

I suffered at this time from small boils on the hands, feet, or face, accompanied by feverishness, a complaint (apparently peculiar to Meccah) which foreigners are seldom known to escape during the first month of their residence there. For a few days I was laid up with a very sharp touch of fever, lost count of time, nor did I attempt to recover any dates until my return to Jeddah. About this time

the end of the Fast Ramazan came, and the Great Feast lasting for three days brought out the whole population, decked in their gaudiest apparel, while the guns from each of the three Turkish forts fired a salute of twenty-one at the times of the sunrise, noon, and sunset calls to prayers on each of the three days. The worship round the Kaabah in the great square was attended by larger numbers than I saw at any other time, notwithstanding that but few of the pilgrims had as yet arrived. I estimated that there could not have been less than thirty thousand assembled at the sunset prayer on the second day. It was an imposing spectacle to see those thousands of bearded, turbaned, hard, worldly men standing, circle widening upon circle, round their sacred Kaabah, silently following the imam as he praised God and blessed Mohammed. Then as from one voice rises the great cry, "God is great!" stirring emotions that must be felt to be appreciated, and simultaneously all bow and prostrate themselves with their faces to the earth. I have often stood in my window-recess going through these motions, unconsciously wrapt in the scene before me; every bright-coloured dress or brilliant turban a contribution to an extent of blended colour which the eye could not take in, each wave of prostration as it swept over this rainbow-tinted space making aurora-

like transformations. In the twilight it was beautiful and impressive beyond most human displays. At this time the Kaabah was opened, but I did not now venture to seek admission, though I did so on a future occasion. At the end of three weeks I began to know the ropes and find my way about pretty well. I had taken the bearings of most remarkable objects by the stars and sun, inquiring their names and the histories connected with them.* One day I took a rather wider cruise to the top of a hill (Jebel Kubays), about a quarter of a mile south of the centre of the city and five or six hundred feet high, and rather steep on the north side, from which I hoped to get a good view. On this hill Mohammed is said to have wrestled with a great infidel, one Nimrud, and defeated him by a miracle, Nimrud being much the stronger man. It was on this hill also that Mohammed commanded the moon to rise half in the east and half in the west, then disappear down the sleeve of his mantle. On the highest point will the Haram be perched on the Day

* I must here caution the reader that most of my observations and statements depend on correctness of judgment, and may be, in some cases, but the widest approximations. I had not the simplest instruments—as a watch or a compass, to make no more scientific pretensions—and my notes were necessarily very scanty. I had, moreover, to look for nearly all information to the most ignorant and superstitious of Easterns, the Hindis.

of Judgment, previous to ascending into heaven, carrying with it all saved Mohammedans. Here there is a small mosque, from which, as I expected, a bird's-eye view of the whole city can be obtained. The town lies in a basin among steep hills of from five hundred to seven hundred feet in height, and probably not more than one thousand two hundred to one thousand five hundred above the sea. The whole of this valley, about one mile and a half long by one-third of a mile across, is packed and crammed with buildings of all shapes and sizes, placed in no kind of order, climbing far up the steep side of the surrounding hills, with here and there an outlying house on the summit of some rock, looking as though crowded out and waiting for a chance to squeeze into the confusion below; a curious gray mass, flat-topped, to an European eye roofless, half-plastered, for plaster in this climate is always either being put on, or well advanced in coming off, but never to be seen in its entirety. The walls of the houses are composed of uncut stone and rubble from three to six feet thick, in very high buildings even thicker, but stone is used only for the sills of windows or jambs and arches of doorways, and very little brick is employed anywhere. Notwithstanding the substantial thickness of the walls, tottering ruins may be found by the sides of the most thronged

thoroughfares in every part of the city. Many of the houses are of great height, large and factorylike, full of little windows ; seldom two adjacent houses face the same way or are the same height ; nothing resembling a row or street could by any stretch of imagination be extricated from such a chaos of masonry. It was impossible, even from my elevated point of view, to trace a hundred yards of open space between houses in any direction (many of the passages are boarded over, which to a certain extent conceals them), except on the outskirts of the town, where two or three suburbs straggle off up the less inclined outlets from the valley, and where the ground is not so thickly built over, though with the same systematic irregularity. The rule seems to be that no two things must be alike, an Eastern characteristic developed into a fixed law of non-uniformity in everything about Meccah, a town which —built as it is of fragments of the crumbling rock about, made to adhere with thirty per cent. of coarse lime, together with the dusky crowds creeping in swarms about its dark lanes and streets, if such mere tortuous intricacies can be called so—suggests the simile of the giant ant-hill most strikingly, and indeed it applies better than any other description. There is a great sameness about all this detailed dissimilarity, from the midst of which the Haram stands out most prominently,

at once fixing the attention, and indeed it is the main feature of Meccah. It is a large quadrangular open space, its longest direction north-east by east and south-west by west, enclosed within four arched colonnades or arcades, one hundred and ninety yards on the longest sides by one hundred and twenty-seven yards on the shortest, close up to which, on the exterior, houses are built, except on the east side, where it is bounded by a street skirting the wall of the Haram.

The arcades, which are twenty-five feet high, have a row of little domes, thirty-six on the long and twenty-four on the short sides, running along the centre of the top, which is fifty feet wide; but at the two principal entrances, in the middle of the north and west sides, there begins a widening of the roof, which has two more rows of domes. These I did not count, and under the arcades the projection of the roof is not apparent, the space being occupied by offices of the Haram built under them. There are six tall minarets, placed at intervals round the outside of the enclosure, one or two of which must be considerably over one hundred and fifty feet in height. From the inside of the arcades a number of stone pathways lead across the gravelled square to a central-paved oval space round the Kaabah, a plain unornamented oblong, of closely-pointed, massive, cyclopean

masonry, thirty-eight feet by thirty square, and forty feet high, as I afterwards ascertained when some portion of the cover was removed. It is covered with a heavy black cloth, which has a good deal of silk in its composition, and all round it, ten feet from the top, a band about two-and-a-half feet deep, very richly worked in bullion, with the Caluma, the Mohammedan profession of faith, the whole of the black cloth being damasked with the same characters. The marble pavement glistens in the sun from the high state of polish in which it is kept by the feet of the pilgrims, who may be seen at all hours, both night and day, performing the tawaf. There are a few little buildings in the square, such as an erection over the well (Zem Zem) and the stations of the imams of the different sects. Add to these flocks of blue rock pigeons settled in the square, flying over and about it, perched on every available ledge not covered with little wire spikes, and I can show you no more of the Haram from my present standpoint. There are three Turkish forts or castles on the highest points of the hills around commanding the town, and covering its three principal approaches ; they form a triangle with one another—north-east, west, and south. Jebel Kubays, like every other resort of pilgrims, is frequented by sturdy beggars, the sturdiest occupying

the best positions, having handkerchiefs spread out before them with a few suggestive copper coins laid out on them. Before I left I was mulcted of, for an Eastern, a fabulous amount of coin by these beggars. A young Arab damsel with lovely eyes, by no means coy, followed me down from the top and beguiled me of my last half-piastre when she uncovered the lower part of her face in a dark passage near the bottom of the hill.

The measurements and numbers given were obtained at different times by a regular system, which I followed on every opportunity. I carried with me wherever I went a bamboo stick exactly a yard long, which I dropped or laid down carelessly as I moved about. No one would have suspected the zealous devotee crawling on his hands and knees at night round the holy Kaabah was by way of a prayer mumbling the number of times he moved his stick. The height of buildings I got by measuring their shadows, which bore the same proportion to the object as my stick's shadow bore to three feet, provided I had a plain surface, as in the Haram. All the measurements given in feet may be relied on as tolerably accurate, and were noted down at the time.

On the afternoon of this day I ventured into the Haram alone for the first time. On the day of my

arrival in Meccah the occasion had been one on which I had not been in a condition to observe much, seeing the desperately tiring journey that had just transported me into such a whirl of strange surroundings. But I had now got the run of things, and felt sufficiently at home to go almost anywhere in Meccah. Each of the gates of the Haram is kept by a man—generally Hindi—who takes charge of the shoes of the worshippers as they pass in, and deposits each pair separately in a large wicker framework divided into pigeon-holes. Should you be in the habit of always using the same gate, you may give this man an occasional present on any special feast or fast day, but, if entering for the first time, or by a gate you are not accustomed to use, he looks for some trifling copper coin ; though, as a rule, these men do not openly beg, from which fact I infer they must be paid from the funds of the Haram.

What is very noticeable on first entering the sacred precincts is the general solemn expression of the faces round you ; everybody has on his Sunday-go-to-meeting countenance, and converses in a sober subdued tone, while those sitting have their feet carefully tucked under them—this is a point of etiquette everywhere, but especially to be observed in the Haram—and those lying down have their feet turned

away from the Kaabah. Should you carry your shoes in your hand, as some do who may be going out by a different gate from the one by which they entered, you must hold them sole to sole, and no one would think of spitting while in the Haram, except on the soles of his shoes. Only privileged beggars are to be met with in the Haram, such as maimed or very old, and these do not force tribute from you after the manner of "bakhshish," merely getting in your way, and making themselves and their infirmities conspicuous. One old blind fellow puzzled me for a long time, by the rapidity of his movements from place to place among the thickly-set pillars supporting the arcades without a stick or any other apparent means of guiding himself, until I found by watching him that he was guided by the joints of the pavement over which he walked, feeling their direction and length with his big toes. A number of water-carriers go about among the crowd standing liquors-up indiscriminately, or getting paid by anyone liberal enough; sometimes, if you don't give them a trifle after imbibing, their generosity exceeds all bounds, and they douche you from head to foot with a second cupful. As the water is Zem Zem, you, of course, deem it too great an honour, and bestow a blessing with a benign grin in return for your drenching;

beaming outwardly, while the chilly liquid trickles down the small of your back.

Here and there may be seen, at any time night or day, parties of devotees sitting in circles droning out short prayers, over and over, hour after hour, with a uniformity of sound and expression—ecstatic grunts and swaying of the body—which to call monotonous would be to speak of the hundred-ton gun as a trifle large, or the *Great Eastern* as a tidy craft indeed. This sort of thing is kept up with a persistent monotony that becomes simply bewildering. Enthusiasts after some hours go into a religious frenzy, and what between sheer exhaustion and their mental condition, work themselves up to foaming inarticulate idiocy. I have seen these fits present the symptoms of epilepsy. To be able to do this well is considered not exactly an accomplishment but rather a gift, and the possessor is looked upon with great reverence.

Men's convictions should be respected whatever they may be; but the contemplation of this fanaticism gave rise in me to an unhappy train of thought. To think that the noble faith founded by that redeemer Mohammed, at whose coming “the whole world was lost in the darkness of sin,” if it ever was, and to the stimulating influence of whose hostility

Christianity may be said to owe its present state, if I read my history aright. To think that the faith preached by such as the earnest Omer, the faith held by the illustrious Moors and many a chivalrous Saladin, should have fallen off in the hands of these Eastern weaklings to a mere belief in prayer doing. How much cant do we hear iterated and reiterated about the "essential unprogressiveness of Mohammedanism?" I fear, as that stirring faith has failed to make anything of the Eastern, there is but a poor look-out for Christianity. If every tinted skin from light straw to ebony were Evangelical Low Church to-morrow, there would be as much opium and tobacco consumed as before: the only benefit to humanity would be found in the workings of the Protestant alcohol and six-shooter, those sturdy irregular followers of the Christian Church militant, whose cutting-up of the retreat none but the very fittest of the fit survive. "Keep off the grass." I do not charge my readers with habitually infringing Park bye-laws, when I suppose that at some time they may have found it convenient to cut across the tender turf in spite of the above admonition. Well, while promenading the arcades of the Haram for the first time, I felt a precisely similar sensation of uncomfortableness as I have felt while committing

the above offence, no more ! And yet I remember only a very few years ago being oppressed for days by the horrible guilt of having attended divine service in a Dissenting chapel.

How a few years of roughing it does knock “hereditary prejudice” out of a man, to be sure ! It is now enough for me that I have met many good men, “aye, good men and true,” of most religions—Catholic, Moslem, Protestant, or Buddhist—more good than bad : so the world may still be lived in, thank goodness ! How I could ramble on ! But I must not do so here, though I may remind the reader that I have only promised to “spin my yarn in my own way,” and ask him to bear with my occasional wanderings ; so just another word before “standing off on the long tack,” and if you are the reader I suppose myself writing for, I shall not offend by offering the following little bit of instruction.

The name Mohammedanism is applied by Christians to a faith, the followers of which do not know it by any such name. They call themselves “worshippers of the one God,” and have, in my humble opinion, a rather fine conception of that deity. They are “true believers” in all the patriarchs and prophets from Adam down, through Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ to Mohammed, whose coming they believe to have

been prophesied by the "Man of Peace," whose reappearance on earth is prophesied by Mohammed. And it is generally held by so-called Mohammedan theologians that the time of his reappearance is very near at hand; so much so that the mere repetition of such a statement was a standing byword among the pilgrims of every nation while I was in Meccah. Also the old idea of the near approach of the end of the world is very prevalent in the East just now, which, all in all, is about as ripe for the reception of some Darwaysh "Peter the Hermit" as it well could be, and were he to come upon the scene in some such a centre as Hyderabad in the Deccan, Mohammedanism might be giving some very troublesome death throes in a year or two. However, we need not be very much alarmed, as they have not sufficient unity left among them to organise anything like a formidable "jihad"—crescentade—anywhere.

To return to Meccah. Observing and inquiring were now the only things which recalled me to my identity. I had become so accustomed to my surroundings, and accommodated myself to circumstances so rapidly, that in six weeks I was as much at home as if I had been a Mohammedan all my life. I formed friends, had little tiffs and jealousies with my companions in the household—we all having the same

interests, and even eating out of the same plates, without offering to bite, though the disposition to do so is so strong as to be barely under control. Darwinites may safely take my word for this fact, and are at liberty to make use of it as a startling analogy. My trencher-mates were a blind Moulvi,* and a gentleman with only two fingers on his right hand, the only one with which a Mohammedan may take food. I had, with infinite pains, worked this myself, thinking I would stand a better chance ; but the first time I sat down I found I had immensely underrated my friends' abilities, for I never saw two men with such an alarming capacity for curry and rice, or who showed such extraordinary skill at putting it away. At first I was a little fastidious, and had rather a prejudice in favour of not seeing a greasy black hand scratching merrily among my food. I did not seem to enjoy it as much as I ought ; however, it was only a prejudice which I had to overcome. I began by imagining lines drawn over the dish, separating a corner of it to myself and operating inside these bounds. This sort of thing did not last long, the two-fingered gentleman's two long fingers would come ambling along through

* Doctor of Divinity.

my little rice wall before I had got my third fistful swallowed ; or the Moulvi's skinny hand would wave like a mesmeric pass over the dish, scatter grains that had stuck to his fingers from the last mouthful over it, and then alight on my most meaty morsel, a piece I had perhaps had my eye on from the first ; but it would have shown greedy haste on my part to have taken it so early in the play. No, I hadn't a chance with these two thieves, for they got away five-sixths of the mess every meal, and with such grace too. "Bless you," they would say, "how little you eat, Mohammed Amin !" as they shared the last mouthful between them.

There was a time when I thought, to pretend to know anything about India, you must at least own to a passion for curry and rice. Ah yes, that was before I set myself up for an authority on the matter, when I could not have given you the following recipe for a real native curry :—Set a pot on the fire, put anything and some water into it, add saffron and powdered chillies till you are perfectly satisfied that the keenest palate could detect nothing else and it is so hot that you would rather be skinned alive than eat a spoonful of it, call it by the name of the next chief ingredient ; cook it in any way, as long as you like, and in the meantime cast about for some-

thing else to put in it, it does not in the least matter what—a handful of shot or a piece of brown paper—just throw anything at it, you're perfectly safe. Serve it at any meal—breakfast, lunch, or dinner, all are equally suitable; and, if a victim hints that it is rather hot, and you want to be thoroughly native, swear "by Allah, it has not heard the name of chilly."

After the evening meal, we all used to sit round a lamp in the middle of the room, eating sweets, smoking hookahs, and telling stories. I got to be very fond of the hookah; the smoke passes through a chamber full of water which takes up the more solid particles and condenses the steam from the tobacco and cools the smoke, which is always inhaled right into the lungs and has a very soothing effect, though somewhat painful to a beginner.

Sometimes I would tell a story, something in this style:—The Amér begins by asking me, "You have been in many countries, Mohammed Amin?"

"Why not, your honour? Is not my work sailing?"

"I have heard there is a big fish in the sea, bigger than a ship?"

"I have seen many and hunted them in the sea to the south of India!" and so go on to give a long account of whaling to which all would listen most

attentively, the Amér occasionally asking shrewd questions; or I would tell of a country where the sun does not set for six months, where there is hardly any land to be seen, all ice, ice, ice.

The Amér has said, "Good! Is there such a place in the world?"

"Yes."

"Good! If there is nothing but ice, for what do ships go?"

This is expected to be a poser, and the whole circle say "Yes, yes," and look inquiringly at me.

"Oh, there is a big animal called walrus, as big as two camels, having the body of an ox, the feet of a crocodile, the head of a tiger, tusks like an elephant, and tail of a fish; it is very fat, and we went to hunt them."

I can see incredulity on every countenance, and the Amér puts a final clencher with "Good! and what can it get to eat to make it so fat?"

"The fish in the sea!"

Here follow general laughter and exclamations of "God! what a father of lies!"

I invented many wonderful stories to amuse them and found, here as everywhere, truth less credited than fiction. I have been simply disbelieved when I said I had seen the late Sultan

Abdool Azis and Her Majesty ; even an attempt to describe their appearance would not carry conviction.

Altogether I was not at all unhappy, and remember many pleasant evenings with my Mohammedan friends, with whom I was, I believe, a bit of a favourite all round, and looked upon as an agreeable harmless fellow, my punctilious observance of all religious duties making me much approved by the most devout. I often astonished even the blind Moulvi by my knowledge of divinity and the soundness of my principle—though I could neither read nor write much, and had spent my whole life among men who were only Mohammedan by name. I made also a number of acquaintances outside ; a chatty old barber to whom I went twice a week to get my head shaved, and who had been a “Company’s sepoy,” I found very entertaining. He knew Bombay well, and liked comparing notes with me, talking about those “Shaitan” English, whom I could not help thinking he remembered kindly, though he of course joined me in my Mohammedan disapproval of them, expressing a little proper patriotic antipathy.

One day, when work and talk were rather “slack,” the old fellow casually remarked, *à propos* of the previous conversation, “There is an Englishwoman in Meccah, ‘The Lady Venus’ by name.”

This was an eye-opener, though I took care not to show it, merely replying in an uninterested way :

“Praise be to God, how long has she been here?”

“Many years.”

“Whose zenana is she in?”

“Nobody’s ; she works at sewing and keeps herself, a Nawab gives her a room in his zenana house, and she does some little work for him. She is old.”

“She is not an English lady. I think perhaps she is a half-caste.”

“No, she is a real lady, sahib. Would you like to see her?”

“Yes, I will speak English to her and find out who she is.” For I did not conceal any of my Christian accomplishments ; instead, I rather bragged of them and got it believed I pretended to know more than I really did. Whether the old barber wanted to test me with a real Englishwoman, or whether he did it in a kindly busybody spirit, I cannot say ; there is no accounting for motives. At any rate, he arranged a meeting at his brother-in-law’s house (a Moulvi) at two o’clock next day, saying he was certain to get the woman to come. The old fellow may have seen clean through me and expected a tip from one of us, and, if so, he got one. You may be sure I had but one thing to think about that night. An English-

woman in Meccah ; been here many years ; impossible ! I have seen a gentleman driving an ox team in his swallowtails, and once met a Cambridge B.A. before the mast in a whaler ; but this seemed impossible even to me. Still I thought, "I am here, and I did not find it very difficult to get here either ;" and great misgivings came as it occurred to me, I don't know how in the name of the Prophet I could get out if anyone wanted to stop me ; and then, to have to spend a whole life as she was doing, in such wretchedness and misery, buried alive in Meccah, I could put up with it while the novelty and the excitement of acting a difficult part lasted, but twelve months of it would kill me. "No," I said, "she can't be an Englishwoman ;" and I consoled myself by settling she must be a country-born half-caste, fair enough to be called English. However I should see.

The next day I put on a clean tunic and bright red cumerbund, and paid as much attention to the set and folds of my turban as I ever did to the tying of a white choker, and brushed out my beard with a—Allah, preserve us!—pig's-bristle brush. That brush had got me into great disrepute for a time, for incautiously telling the Amér what it was made of when asked ; but no notice was taken of it,

as they did not want to believe, and I took care to publicly explain on the first opportunity how hair-brushes were made of elephants' hair, and the old bristles went their round of some two dozen faithful beards every day. Allah, preserve us! Allah, forgive us!

When, having got myself up for the occasion, I hurried off at the right time in a great state of anticipation to the good Moulvi's house, called a boy in the yard, announced myself, and went upstairs into a little room about the size of a small bedroom, very clean; the only sign of untidiness being the usual dust-heap in the doorway. At one end of this room were a number of shelves let into the wall, covered with curious china-ware. This is to be seen in nearly every well-to-do house in Meccah, though how or at what time the china-ware found its way into the Hejaz in such quantities I could not find out. Perhaps it comes directly through Persia; but I heard of no existing import trade.* It is likely to be very old, as it is valued only for ornamental

* I should think it not improbable that some of it represents the remnants of treasure that may have been brought to Arabia at any time during the five thousand years of prosperous commerce carried on from its shores before Vasco da Gama led Europe round the Cape of Good Hope to "far Cathay."

purposes. Some of the vases were filled with artificial flowers ; and two French flower lithographs hung on the wall. Representations of animal life are prohibited to Mohammedans. There was also a six-feet by four-feet window, with open teak-wood shutters, roughly carved in an elaborate pattern of very unfinished but substantial joinery. The only furniture in the room was a cushioned ottoman running half round the walls about eighteen inches high and three feet wide, having one or two pillows lying on it ; a rough teak-wood cabinet standing against the wall, and, lying on it, the Moulvi's Koran, praying-carpet, and turban. On the floor a good Persian carpet, one or two small mats, and of course a hookah and spittoon.

This may be taken as a good specimen of a room in any middle-class Meccan's house. The occupants were the Moulvi, a kind honest old man with a genial pleasant face. Who could believe he had been a great conspirator in his youth ? Yet he is now an exile, and dare not return to his own country ; and is said to have been one of the most daring mutineer leaders at Lucknow. I was greatly taken with the genuineness of the old fellow. He may have fought, and fought hard, for his faith and his country, but I believe he never acted other than conscientiously

according to his lights—which is saying a good deal for a Hindi. Seated on the ottoman near him, the barber, a most “or’nary cuss,” a shiny old black with a straight white beard and a tongue like a Bengali; and the woman sitting on the floor in the costume of the country—a figure squatted down with a sheet thrown over it and the edges well tucked under, two slits somewhere near the eyes with pieces of gauze sewn over them for looking through. Give the whole a convulsive subdued shaking, and you have the “Lady Venus” as I first saw her.

I slipped off my shoes, entered the room, and made my bow and “Peace be upon you,” exchanged a few “Take-a-seats,” “Don’t-stirs,” with the Moulvi, then subsided cross-legged on the floor opposite the woman. She evidently understood my real character, and it seemed a painful interview to her. We sat silently for some minutes, the motion of her hand to her eyes under the veil showing she was in tears.

At length the Moulvi spoke to her in Arabic, telling her to ask me some questions in English—as my name, age, country, employment—all of which I answered as I wished the Moulvi to believe; but when she asked, at his instance, how I came to Mecca, and I replied—“God put it into my head,” which she interpreted, “God put it into his heart,”

I felt safe and talked more freely. After a time, by her advice, we talked in Hindi on general and safe topics of interest to both. I found that she had been amongst Mohammedans since 1858 ; and satisfied myself, in the half-hour's conversation, that she was a real, educated Englishwoman. When she rose to go I asked her in English if I might shake hands with her. She said : "No ;" and told me the part of the Haram in which she prayed, where I could meet her any day at noon.

Afterwards I stayed to dinner with the Moulvi, his poor relation, the barber, joining us. He improved the occasion after dinner, over a pipe, by giving me a long religious and moral discourse—a fac-simile of the sort of advice we get from our good old God-fearing seniors at home. He made me feel miserably hypercritical and as ashamed of myself as I could be. I believe I blushed when the old fellow said : "Go, and peace be upon you ; trust in prayer, and be sure God will protect you ;" at the same time slipping a dollar into my hand as a token of good feeling. This is an Eastern custom of simple substantial politeness, very preferable to "What will you have to drink ?" though much the same kind of thing.

When I got home I found the Amér had suddenly

made up his mind to start on a long-talked-of pilgrimage to Jerusalem in two days, and that four of the party and myself were to be left to occupy the house till his return. During the next two days it was "all hands and idlers" hard at work at it, getting ready for the road, purchasing stores, and packing boxes. The Amér personally undertook that most important part of the preparations, the confectionery, and had the "third warrior," the head cook, and myself as assistants. We made about half a hundredweight of a new kind of sweetmeat the Amér had just taken a fancy to, intended to last the trip, but the Amér ate so much of it before it was cooked that he made himself sick, so he took an emetic, had a good cry, and would not have any of it packed up. This was of a piece with the whole thing, everybody ordering, nobody obeying, packing up things in the wrong boxes, leaving the most important articles to the last moment. I never expected they would get away at all, and certainly they would not if they had waited till things were in order. However, camels had been engaged and came at the right time—nothing ready of course; still away they went, bundled everything handy on to the camels and started; found they had forgotten some-

thing, sent back for it ; sent back for something else, and kept on sending back for things till they got too far away. One of the last things sent back for was the Amér's watch, a very valuable English gold one, which was found under the rug where he had been enjoying an opium sleep during the hubbub of the last two hours before starting. All my Hindi friends were addicted to opium, and in any emergency used just to increase the dose a little and trust to Providence. They got on all right in a kind of "good-enough" fashion, by the "help of God," they say, and I suppose that's it. I know they left half the things purchased for the voyage, and took a couple of camel-loads of rubbish that wouldn't be of any earthly use to them. Before they left the Amér's public purse-bearer gave me thirty dollars for the support of my companions and myself while he was away. The four who were left with me were the "third warrior," a boy, the sort of youth you instinctively call Jack the moment you see him, and a couple of old black nonentities, one to cook and the other to eat. The boy Jack's story was rather a characteristic one as to how he came to be with the Amér. He was thirteen years of age, the son of a Hindi small farmer, and had been seized with the desire to rove, which I suppose we

are all subject to more or less strongly ; it seems to make its appearance at some time in most people's lives, and just as the English youth looks to the sea as a safety-valve through which to exhaust his uncontrollable wandering propensities, so the Mohammedan invariably vents the same mania in a pilgrimage to Meccah. Jack "felt a call," and appears to have had it badly too, for though his father beat him and his friends laughed at him, still he held out for months keeping up the same cry, always having the same object in view—he must go to Meccah. He offered to accompany pilgrims and work, but of course could not get the employment so much coveted, such pilgrims as do take servants confer a great favour on them by doing so ; indeed most wealthy pilgrims take their relatives in such capacities. Remuneration is seldom expected by any, more than is sufficient for their subsistence. At last the mania reached to such a pitch with Jack that one night he stole all the money his father had (one rupee) and ran off. He first walked from his home near Hyderabad Scinde to Kotiee, and here his story became rather confused ; he seemed to have gone on "fire-ships" (steamers) and "fire-carriages" (railway trains) for the first time in his life ; he is only clear that he found himself in

Kurrachee after some days, and knew he was a good step on his road to Meccah. Jack then "stowed away" on board an English steamer for Bombay (how a country boy who had never seen a ship before could be up to this I cannot understand !), and was put in prison in Bombay for doing so. When he got out he told his story to many Mohammedans whom he asked for help, and who thought it very great "kismat," and that he must be "chosen of God;" but though he received enough charity nobody offered to take or send him to Meccah. Jack's zeal had not spent itself yet; no, his success hitherto encouraged him to go on.

The pilgrim season came round; crowded steamers were leaving Bombay for Jeddah, and on board one of these Jack managed to conceal himself on the day of sailing. When the ship was about four days out, all the pilgrims were mustered, and Jack, with half-a-dozen others, was found to have no ticket. It is probable nothing would have been done to them really, more than a kick or two, but the officers of the ship made a great fuss, sent them up on to the look-out bridge, and half-frightened them to death. Two of the stowaways were the only two barbers on board, so the other five hundred pilgrims got up a subscription to pay for them; but the officers would

not let these two go without the rest, so they all spent another day on the bridge. In the meantime the Amér, who was a first-class passenger, heard of this, and also heard that one of the delinquents was from Hyderabad, and thinking he was a countryman of his own, at once made up the subscription and had them all released. He then sent for Jack, but, finding he came from Scinde and not from the Deccan, was of course very much disgusted ; nevertheless he heard the boy's story, and ended by taking him into his service. The boy is now with us in Meccah, happy as Larry. Not only is the stolen rupee intact, but he has added seven annas to his treasure and has a very good outfit for a nigger. I never could get on with this boy, always had to be giving him mild Hindi slaps, and abusing his female relatives : he was a cheeky young dog. I could not help a certain amount of sympathy—a sort of fellow-feeling—and that perhaps led me to give him too much of his own way.

The zenana was also left, but they lived in another part of the house, and I saw little of them. An old hag (one of those Eastern horrors more hideous than European could picture—a fury with a face like three kicks in a mud wall) used to come down to us to beg tea or anything nice we might happen to have going

for her mistress the Begum, the Amér's mother, who was the head of the zenana; for though we lived in completely separate households, our culinary operations were within the range of the old lady's (the Begum's) nose, and she never failed to make her ancient handmaiden swoop down upon any little extra indulgence we might choose to be having. The old women servitors, having discarded the veil, take the place in India of the eunuch in other Mohammedian countries, that is, go-betweens between the men's and women's apartments, acting as spies on both, and are generally chosen for remarkable ugliness.

The first thing we did in the morning after the Amér's departure was to organise a general clean-up. The sleeping apartment had not been swept out since we had been living in it, and was filthy. We removed out of this room, fifteen feet by twelve feet, and threw into the street outside (this being the custom of the country) eight large packing-cases full of rags, spoilt and wasted, fragments of food in different stages of rot, broken pots, bottles, tins, old shoes, straw, torn matting, and sticks. Besides all this, two snakes, a dead cat, a great many rats and mice, both dead and alive, and about five or six pounds weight of maggots out of one corner. I was afraid to raise the carpet, heaven

knows what awful disclosures might have followed ! All this brought a perfect treasure-trove to Jack in the way of lost trifles, and I found among the rubbish a ball of opium, which I pocketed. Next we cleared out the cooking-room adjoining the sleeping-room. In the middle of this room there was a large sink, a concave circular stone about four feet in diameter, with a round hole in the centre, down which the refuse and offal of cooking and butchering were thrown. Round this stone we used to sit and perform our everlasting ablutions. The aroma emitted from the hole was—pooh ! “odours of Eden, myrrh, aloes, and cassia !” Pooh ! Its fragrance varied in kind from day to day, but always seemed to be at its worst. What horrible depths of corruption existed below might be guessed from the thick layer of maggots that formed a coating to the inside of the hole as far down as could be seen, constantly writhing and crawling upwards, spreading round at the surface, and developing into flies which filled the air with their black buzzing filthinesses. I formed a plan for the amending of this which was strongly opposed at first; however, I got the “third warrior” and Jack to join me, and we carried the day. We filled the large rice-pan with water, about six gallons, made it hot,

and emptied it boiling down the hole. This we did three times, with such beneficial effect that no objection was raised to it on the next occasion when the maggots began to appear, and we very soon saw a sensible diminution in the swarms of flies. I then purchased some benzoin, a yellow gum or resin, which has a very agreeable scent when burnt and is the aversion of all kinds of winged vermin. With this we fumigated the whole place, and so completed the sanitary arrangements of our little household. I am aware the foregoing savoury fragment is not very "inviting," but I think the reader will recognise how scanty justice would have been done to the description had such important factors in the sum of our discomfort been omitted.

During the last three days I had had no time to look for the "Lady Venus," but the moment I was at liberty I set out in quest of her. To such of my readers as may be wholly unacquainted with the customs of the East, I may here explain why in my interview with the "Lady Venus" such great caution was preserved. Our being English, and the subjects of our conversations—which will appear obvious and sufficient reasons—had really little to do with it. If we had been born Meccans we should not have been able to maintain nearly such free intercourse as we

did, for we should have had more prying friends to make scandal of our (from a Mohammedan point of view) grossly improper "goings on"—immoral they would have been called, in a society where it is a canon that no woman may uncover her face to any man who is not her father, brother, or husband; and it was chiefly on this account that our meetings had to be of such a clandestine character. Any one familiar with the social habits of Mohammedans—the jealousy, conventional and affected, of the men, and the formal restraint under which the women are held—will be surprised that I was able to walk in public with the lady without attracting notice in the way I did; but in Meccah the women are allowed great freedom. Many of the most ordinary precautions of the harem are relaxed, and it is quite the correct thing for the women of the wealthy to appear at public worship unattended, praying among the men, no part of the Haram being set apart for them as in every other mosque. On the second day after the Amér's departure, I went to that part of the Haram she had mentioned as her place of prayer at noonday. After the prayers I remained sitting, counting my beads. There are ninety-nine beads in a Mohammedan rosary, not counting certain little pendants or stops. As you count your beads, for each

bead passed you mention one of the ninety-nine names or attributes of God: the hundred is not complete, as the perfection of God is unlimited. A Mohammedan therefore says, "God is great, good, merciful," etc. etc. etc., through the ninety-nine; imagine the rest—a sort of 99·9 recurring idea: or, as others say, the hundredth attribute is love, which man shares with God, and so is not mentioned.

When the crowd had dispersed I observed a little way off on my left a woman sitting alone. I thought this might be my friend, and looked fixedly at her for a few minutes. She was evidently looking at me, and I thought I noticed a beckoning movement of the hands under her garments, so I rose and walked towards her. She then got up and went out of the Haram, and I followed her at a little distance. We had gone some quarter of a mile through the town in this way, she always looking back at me before turning a corner, when she stopped, and let me come up to her. She at once addressed me in English, telling me to walk by her side, and that we were going to a Hindi friend's where we could talk undisturbedly as long as we liked.

Some two hundred yards farther on we passed through a narrow part of the street, where a Turkish sentry was posted; here she talked loudly in Arabic,

and I answered her in the same, making a great display of such expressions as I was master of. Half-an-hour's walk brought us to a little shieling, into which we went and sat down. I found the old Hindi who dwelt in it very well disposed. He made tea, gave me a smoke of his hookah, excused himself, and left us to ourselves. What a talk we had! How we let loose our English tongues! Sometimes we laughed wildly, sometimes she cried. It must have been a strange pleasure to her to hear and talk her native language after so many years. I, who had only been a few weeks away from my kind, felt most foolishly elated, talked all kinds of nonsense, anything that came into my head, just for chattering's sake. We asked one another questions, and asked others without waiting for answers.

We had three hours of this, and then the old Hindi came in, and we thought it time to be going. Before parting she raised her veil and showed me her face, which was as English as my own. We also shook hands, and arranged that a boy Abdallah, a mutual acquaintance, should be our future means of communication. We then parted, and went home by different roads.

That night, as I lay on my rug, thinking over the occurrences of the day, and hugging myself in

the anticipation of many such pleasant conversations—for there was a taste of danger and secrecy that added zest and a feeling of having given another pleasure that made me supremely satisfied and contented that night—only one thing troubled me, almost her last words to me had been, “I can’t make out who you are, child”—she always called me child, I suppose on account of my light-hearted attempts to raise her spirits—and I could not make out who she was. So there and then I thought over a list of questions I meant to ask her at our next meeting; but “man proposes,” etc. Little did I think it would be some weeks before we should meet again, and that then we should have much more interesting matter in hand; and, most incongruous incongruity, a pilgrim fell asleep in sight of the Kaabah repeating those lines of Hood’s :

The other sex, the tender, the fair,
What wide reverses of fate are there !

CHAPTER III.

IN MECCAH DURING THE AMÉR'S ABSENCE.

THERE is so much room for exhibition of taste in the way of personal adornment about the Eastern dress that I defy the most simple-minded of men to don a turban or cumerbund without bringing into play a little vanity. For my part, I became quite an Eastern swell—my tunic of the whitest, my turban of the largest and brightest; and besides, I felt myself to be rather an important personage, a householder, and possibly entitled to a vote for a Kasi,* though I did not test my rights to any great extent in this way. The idea of any rowdy Arab questioning me as to who I was never for a moment entered into my calculations; I swaggered about the streets anywhere and everywhere, but I was doomed

* Judge.

to be let down in a manner that rather astonished my weak nerves.

One day I was passing a large college on the outskirts of the town under the "Rev. the-grace-of-God-d-his-blessings,—D.D." when the students, about one hundred and fifty, of all ages from five to fifteen, were out playing. I stayed to look on at their various games, such as marbles—not unlike the English game, as far as I could see. One little group had an old pistol, snapping caps, and altogether I was much amused watching them, when a little Hindi child near me shouted, "Oh, look at the Christian!" I shall never be able to guess what put it into that son of Iblis's head. Perhaps he had seen Englishmen in India, and was struck with a fancied resemblance; or it may have been only for fun, though Eastern children are not generally given to unprovoked mischief. Up to this nothing of the kind had happened to me, and as it was unexpected it took me very much aback. It also collected all the young imps in the neighbourhood, who took up the cry; and one great hulking brute stepped up to me and said, in a blustering manner, "Christian dog, if you are a Mohammedan make the profession of your faith."

Now I am one of the most peacefully-disposed of

men, as "Jack" says, "I would rather run a mile than fight a minute," yet all my life I have been getting dragged into fights. I suppose I must look like a fellow easily put upon, whereas I have a Bedawi aversion to dirt* as an article of diet. This beggar riled me and I did not feel at all disposed to give an account of myself to him. No, I just took the fellow by the shoulders, turned him round and administered a kick in the rear that must have made him see stars. Now, I do suppose I could not have perpetrated a more un-Mohammedan act. Instead of seizing the opportunity to deliver myself of profuse expressions of devotion and faith, as a Mohammedan does on the slightest provocation, I had offered to my very proper interrogator one of the greatest indignities possible to a Mohammedan—I had struck him with a shoe. It brought a yell of "Ya! Christian" from its recipient, taken up by the whole crew. I had put my foot in it, had been taken off my guard, and now saw things could not be mended, so turned round and attempted to make a dignified retreat, when—whirr!—close past my ear flew a blue object (a pigeon I thought), but it lit a few feet ahead with a clatter that showed the kind of blue rock it was, and another

* I have eaten dirt—that is, taken an insult.

followed, fetching me one on the skull, that would have “settled the number of my mess” but for the thickness of my too attractive head-dress. These Meccan youths living, so to speak, on a stone-heap, get, from constant practice, to be able to deliver a stone as straight and almost as hard as a pistol-shot. I looked round an instant, and saw that the whole swarm had entered into the holy work of stoning a Christian to death, with a zeal worthy of first-century Jews. Stones were coming from all directions, I was getting some nasty blows, and had to defend my face with my hands. My probable ignominious fate flashed across my mind—stoned to death by children, the disclosures that would follow, the example I should be held up as. Suddenly one on the knee and another in the small of the back brought me down; when up again I did not know which way to turn. A pretty little Arab child was struggling to heave a rock he could scarcely lift, I made a rush, seized the squalling brat in my arms, and a run up (“Rugby rules”) of about twenty yards brought me to a long wall, to which I turned my back and held the kicking little wretch before me as a shield. This bewildered my tormentors for a moment, then on they came again, led on by my kicked friend, to rescue young struggling Ibrahim, as I heard them call him.

Poor little Ibrahim ! even when torn nearly limb from limb he looked a very pretty child, and I was sorry for him. The struggle was short and sharp, Ibrahim got terribly mauled, chiefly by his friends. I was somewhat of an old hand at a scrag and managed to keep from under the ruck, watched my chance, bolted off, and got about twenty yards' start before I was missed and the pack set out in full cry after me. A Turkish guard-house was close at hand, into which I rushed, passed the sentry and squatted down behind him out of breath, arms and legs aching with bruises, and completely blown ; however, I was safe for the moment and had time to pull myself together for what had become a very serious affair. In the meantime a crowd of Arabs and Negroes were gathering outside and the word "A Christian !" was being passed, and the Turkish guards were giving me very black looks. One of the soldiers went to bring an officer, and returned in a minute or two with a young lieutenant : very spruce and civilised he looked, it was quite a relief to see him in his Paris-cut uniform. He came up to me and at once addressed me in French ; but I had got myself all there by this time and artlessly replied, "I cannot speak Turkish," and proceeded on to declare that, "Allah was great, all praise be to Allah ! there is only one God,

Mohammed is his prophet," working myself up gradually till at last I rushed out of the guard-house, saw an old friend—an Arab slave-dealer, who in his negotiations with the Amér had smoked many of my cigarettes—seized his stick and went for the promising young crowd with "sons of burnt fathers" and a torrent of similar abuse. The men now all took my side, and the old slave-dealer laughingly apologised for the excess of zeal in the rising generation, though he could not help admiring it; while even the Turkish sentry helped to disperse the boys with a parting stone, and the lieutenant showed me out into a back way by which I could go home without any chance of being further annoyed. On my way home I strayed into a coffee-shop to arrange my disordered robes, explaining that I had been thrown from my donkey which had bolted. After a smoke and a cup of coffee I began to feel a little more myself, and limped off home, getting stiffer all the time from bruises about the back and limbs. I had luckily no marks on my face, so that I was able to lie down as soon as I got into the house without any awkward questions being asked. My chief fear now was that the affair would get noised abroad in quarters where it would lead to my having a visit paid me by some inquisitive

gentlemen, whom I knew I should not be able to humbug, if once their suspicions were really aroused and they took to serious inquiries.

The Arab to whom the house belonged came also that evening and gave us a good deal of trouble, trying to get us to turn out into a smaller room, so that he might have our larger and better-situated one till the Amér's return; but I knew that the room had been paid for for two months in advance, so would not turn out. Though the fellow was in an independent position, he was not above taking a luck-penny (a dollar), and I was glad to get rid of him so cheap with a blessing backwards. To guard against this sort of thing I told my companions I was very sick (I really was in a good deal of pain), and that I would go and sleep in a little closet off the cooking-room so as not to be disturbed by noise or visitors. Into this room about eight feet by four I moved my clothes and blankets, and did not stir out of it till the Amér's return—about three weeks, during which there were many friendly inquiries for me. My companions stuck to me like bricks, giving out at my request that I had gone to Jeddah. I heard no more of "the Christian" row, and the "third warrior" was very much surprised and would scarcely believe it when I told him some time after

what had happened, and although I insisted I knew more about Christians than he did, he would give me much interesting information about their beliefs and their neglect of certain ablutions. I was much edified to learn that their heaven was an eternal gorge of "that animal's" * flesh and wine.

My assurance and indiscretion had all but done for me, and now I must appear to have gone to the other extreme. It was not so much caution kept me confined the whole time as the ball of opium, a small pill of which I took the first night and continued to take every day, increasing the dose as I found it affecting me. I only ate one meal a day, brought me by the "third warrior" when he came to make up housekeeping accounts. He knew I was under opium and sympathised with me and could recommend nothing better, looking upon that drug as a specific for all maladies. I will not go into the "pains and pleasures of opium eating" more than to say the three weeks passed like three days. I was perfectly happy, everything appeared *couleur de rose*. Groups of devotees sitting under my window in the Haram chanting "La, Illah ; ah ! Il Allah," over and over and over "in a sing-song

* Pig.

tuneful sort of no tune" which had before been most distressing to listen to, would now transform themselves, in my waking dreams, into some merry English party—a picnic perhaps—and the "La-illah" into "La-de-da," the chorus of some charming unheard air. In short, I did not know a moment's discomfort the whole time.

Our living averaged about one dollar a day. As I kept an account of all the money spent I can give an example of a fair day's expenditure.

PROVISIONS ONE DAY FOR FIVE PEOPLE.

(1 RATL, NEARLY 14 oz.)	Piastres.	Parras.
Meat—Camel, 5 ratl : Mutton, 3 ratl ...	5	—
Vegetables for Curry—Parsley, Beetroot, Bavish Marrow, Carrot	4	—
Bread, 2 ratl	2	—
Water, 20 gallons.—4 small goat skins brought to the house	2	—
Sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ ratl	2	—
Dates (best common) 1 ratl	2	—
Wood for fire	2	—
Lentils, $\frac{1}{2}$ ratl	1	—
Milk, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ pint	1	—
Chillies and other Spices for Curry ...	—	20
Sour Milk for Curry	—	20
Tea, $\frac{1}{4}$ oz.	—	20
Tobacco, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. Turkish	1	—
Lamp Oil, Paraffin	—	10
Sundries—Shaving, Fruit, Sweets, Pocket Money, etc.	4	10
	28	11

Besides this we had rice, ghee, and tamarinds in the house, of which we consumed daily—rice, eight pounds ; ghee, four ounces ; tamarinds, half pound. This is very sumptuous living indeed for Hindis ; quite as good and more varied than we got at the Amér's table.

I must not omit to mention little Ismail, an Arab boy whose acquaintance I had made at his father's place of business, in the bazaar near at hand, where I had often gone to talk to them. He was a very bright youth, spoke Hindustani well ; and I had taken rather a fancy to him. Now that I was laid up I found him excellent company, and admitted him almost daily, amusing him greatly, telling him stories by the hour. “Æsop's Fables” I found a capital fund of the very best material, and after them, other children's stories and nursery rhymes, changed of course to suit time and place, as it would not have done to have let him know the original of—

This little *sheep* went to market,
This little *sheep* stopped at home—

or he might not have laughed quite so gleefully at my “rattletrap rhyme.” For the opium had the effect of not only enabling me to converse incessantly but sometimes to improvise rhyme as fast as I could talk.

Many travellers in the East, especially lady travellers, have had a good word to say for Eastern boys ; and they are very attractive, I admit. This peculiar loveliness, for it is such, may be easily accounted for, as they have generally good features, many of them being remarkably handsome, and fine eyes are the rule ; all have a feminine grace of manner and speech acquired in the harem, which is their home for the first seven or eight years of their lives. And there is also a downrightness and freedom from anything like affectation about them, when in the presence of strangers, which contrasts very favourably with the bashfulness of the nicey-nicey stereotyped English schoolboy, who has all individuality stamped out of him at a public school. Mohammedan children owe this to a primitive Hebrew innocence, there being hardly a word in their language which they may not freely use as occasion requires. "To the pure all things are pure." With all this, however, they are intelligent to a degree, their intellectual faculties being very highly developed at an early age, and so far as simple learning and having an amount of knowledge (such as it is) in their heads, goes, they are certainly in advance of European children of their years ; but by the time they are fourteen they have attained the limits of an ordinary Mohammedan

education. They read and write well in more than one language, do simple arithmetic, are perfectly instructed in all the minutest observances of their faith, and have an immense stock of religious lore, in which they take a deep interest and no little pride. For the manner in which the idea of the One God and antagonism to all other creeds is instilled into their minds goes down greatly with the youthful sinners ; their little faces brighten up bravely as they declare the One God, and scowl savagely as they curse and defy the “kaffir” in a “quite too amusing” way.

But after leaving the harem all their former attractiveness is soon rubbed off by rude intercourse with the men ; and I know few creatures more unlovable than the Eastern in the transition stage from boy to man. He has all the obtrusive forwardness in the vulgar hobbledehoyhood everywhere, and rapidly cultivates the craftiness, low cunning, and brutal coarseness—those chief characteristics of manhood in the East.

On the day before the new moon in December the Amér returned loaded with purchases—crockery, glass-ware, and cutlery, from Cairo ; jewellery, two guns, and a rifle (breech-loading), from Alexandria ; ornamental wood and stone, cups and saucers,

cigarette-cases, etc. from Jerusalem ; altogether about half a ton of flashy French “notions ;” and such news ! Each one of the party seemed bent on overwhelming us with the wonders he had seen—the Suez Canal, the Opera, the Pachas and their beautiful carriages and horses, the splendid livery of their servants.

“ And what did the Pacha wear ? ” asked an old untravelled one, expecting to hear his dress compared to a rainbow.

They could scarcely bring themselves to say it, but were obliged to confess that he “had nothing on but a tarbouche.” They had seen Mohammedans and Christians dressed so that you could not tell but for the hat which was which ; they had seen Christians working as labourers. This seemed to give them great satisfaction. They “chewed” over one to another :—“ Many beggarly Christians under the Sultan”—much to my chagrin, for I knew they could not distinguish between a Greek and an Englishman. Travel had certainly not increased their respect for their rulers.

I now felt perfectly safe while in the Amér’s favour and recognised by him. I came out and began to move about ; gave up opium suddenly, and found my nerves much affected in consequence.

A stranger coming into the room would startle me, I dare not let anyone pass behind me, always backing up to the wall, and it was some days before this wore off. On the day of the new moon I was so ill, it being the day after I stopped my opium, that I was unable to pray, thereby missing much ; for a prayer at Meccah on this day scores something enormous, though I forget exactly how many thousand rupees given in charity it is supposed to equal. I went about a good deal with the Amér now, and wore a less conspicuous dress, keeping more in the background. We paid a visit to the college, the scene of my unlucky encounter. The boys looked very sheepish, and pretended not to recognise me when they saw me in such good company, and you may be sure I let well alone. While in the courtyard, I heard a great squalling and crying going on in one of the rooms, and could not resist my curiosity to see what it was all about ; so separated myself from my party, found my way to the door of the room and looked in, and saw a whole class of about twenty boys being punished. Half had already undergone the bastinado, and were sitting blubbering round the wall, five others were at the time getting it. Two big boys held each one end of a thick stick, with a rope noose in the

middle of it; into this noose each of the culprits had to put one foot, then the stick was twisted round till the feet were squeezed up tightly into a bunch, which was then lifted breast-high by the two assistant-executioners, and a big Arab tutor came down on those wriggling toes with a Malacca cane, as hard as he could let out, showing no mercy: it seemed to be a very effective mode, judging by the yells, struggles and brandishings of the disengaged limbs of the youngsters as they hung in a cluster head down. I saw by the unhappy looks of the rest of the class that the same was in store for them, and as some of my most vindictive assailants were there, I must say I did not pity them much; though I did not care to stay and witness their tortures.

During the next few days I visited a number of shrines and holy places, the name of which is legion about Meccah, there being scarcely a spring or hill round, which is not said to be the scene of some remarkable event in the life of either Adam, Eve, Abraham, Hagar, Ishmael, or some other holy personage; while as for Mohammed, the lies that have been fathered upon him (*honest man!*) would have made him take the dome off his Medinah mausoleum in a great triple somersault, and snort

the sides out of his shrine, if he had been there at all, a fact which there are other good reasons for doubting.

“What are you picking up that stone for?” you inquire.

“Oh! Mohammed was fighting infidels, and God sent angels and a shower,” etc. etc.

“Why are you eating that shrub?”

“Oh! this is called the Prophet’s bread. Mohammed and his companions were starving in the desert and he told them to take this,” etc. etc.

Rocks, pools, holes in the ground, she-camels, dogs, cats, rats, mice, Mohammed, Mohammed, Mohammed, Mohammed.

I used to find a quiet place and sit down and say over all the swearing I knew in five languages, and make resolutions that if I ever got out of this and met a white man who said he believed in miracles, I would go and get a gun and shoot him. Why, if Mohammed had been actively employed since the year one of the Hegira to the present day, performing the marvels attributed to him, he would still have a few legerdemain trifles, in milk and mud, on hand. No!—nonsense apart!—it cannot be established that Mohammed ever openly attempted to dupe his followers with one single miracle. All

these supernatural wonders are the accumulated imaginings of marvel-craving Eastern minds; the more ignorant the more fertile in the like. Not one of my companions but was perfectly well acquainted with the minutest circumstances of half-a-dozen miracles of yesterday, or who had not been eye-witness to at least one. Only a year before the Amér's uncle had been present when six laden camels were either eaten up by the earth or carried off to the zenith—the work of the devil, who appeared in the form of a dog. We are not living in an age of miracles. Are we not? Come to the East and see, or for the matter of that, not so very far East either, for the genuine article.

Such of these places as I did visit I will now attempt to describe. First, the Haram itself, of which I have already given a view from the top of Jebel Kubays, shall be more minutely described. The Kaabah, in the middle of that enclosure, is called the Centre of the World, the Mohammedan Hub of the Universe: towards this Mohammedans in all parts of the earth face when praying. The whole ground within the outer bounds of the arcades is deemed part of heaven on earth, to which it will return on the Last Day. The architectural design of the whole is such that I know of no other structure

or edifice familiar to Europeans with which to compare it.* The same form of mosque may be seen in Cairo and some other places in the East ; but if, as I hope, I have already given the reader a general idea of its form, I may now succeed in conveying some notion of its appearance on closer inspection. It is entered from the street by doorways of different sizes : the two largest are on the northern and western sides, the Gate of Abraham in the western being very high and arched, and really fine. There are a dozen or more other public entrances and a number of smaller private doorways and windows into the offices of the Haram and adjoining dwellings. The tower being some ten feet above the level of the square, you descend, at all the entrances, either a steep paved incline, a flight of steps, or an irregular compound of both, into the arcades, which are about fifty feet wide and paved throughout with limestone and a greenish crystalline stone common in the neighbourhood, laid very unevenly and in small oblong blocks, none of them bigger than could be conveniently carried by a man. The roof is supported on three rows of thirty-six pillars on the

* Sale compares it to the Royal Exchange, London. It is true they both are open squares surrounded by colonnades, but beyond that the two have not a single point of resemblance.

longer and twenty-four pillars on the shorter sides, each sixteen feet apart. Every fourth pillar is an hexagonal-built support about four feet thick, the rest are plain round pillars something more than a foot in diameter, composed generally of either sandstone or limestone. The capitals of these are the only ornamental stone-work in the building; they are carved with flower, scroll, or angular devices, respectively and promiscuously. The roof consists of rows of arches, thirty-six on the longer and twenty-four on the shorter sides longitudinally, and all round three arches transversely springing from every pillar throughout, dividing the ceiling into three rows of small domes, except at the corners, where the architect seems to have got confused, tried to round them off, failed, and so bungled them up anyhow, and at the principal portals, where ingenious, bewildering non-uniformity baffles description. From the top of each transverse arch a large globe lamp is suspended by a brass chain, and all round under the inner row of arches facing towards the Kaabah there hang from a cross-bar, reaching from pillar to pillar, five lamps to each arch. The square itself is gravelled and divided by narrow pavements into a sort of "Union Jack" pattern. There are three bronze date trees, about twelve feet high, with lamps hanging

to the ends of their fronds equidistant from one another, and midway between the Kaabah and the arcades, across the eastern and western ends of the square. All round on the gravel at intervals are placed stacks of earthenware bottles containing water of Zem Zem for the use of the pilgrims. The well Zem Zem is about eighty feet from the north-east corner of the Kaabah. It has an irregular shambling building over it, roofed by a large cupola, a small dome, and a couple of sections of a pagoda, and probably occupying an area of about seventy feet square. On the eastern, western, and southern sides of the Kaabah, at about the same distance as the well, are three other unimportant erections with rather more than their share of lamps. On the northern side, about thirty feet distant, Abraham's Stone is deposited in a small house ten feet high by six by eight feet square, having a large heavy wooden door on its north side. This is the stone which acted as a stage for Abraham when building the Kaabah, passing up and down to and from the work as required with any weight of workmen or material. I did not see the stone, as it can only be seen by paying very highly, and few can afford it; but it is popularly believed to have Abraham's footprint on it—another of the many like impressions Eastern celebrities seem

to have been so fond of leaving. About eight yards off on each side of this building there are two stone pulpits, plain hexagonal pedestals, three feet thick and twelve feet high, topped with a stone railing and mounted by a set of stone steps on the opposite side to that facing the Kaabah. At each of these pulpits commences a row of lamp-posts about ten feet high extending all round the Kaabah about fifteen feet distant from one another, and having between each two posts seven lamps suspended from cross-bars, each post being surmounted by a gilded crescent. Outside this circle the pavement extends about twenty feet, and is the same as that under the arches, while that within the circle of lamps is a pavement composed of smooth flagstones about eighteen inches below the level of the square.

On the western side of the Kaabah is a horseshoe wall four-and-a-half feet high and three feet thick, its ends towards the Kaabah, leaving a passage between, enclosing a semicircular space thirty feet in diameter, in the middle of which is the tomb of Ishmael with an engraved slab of marble over it. The base of the Kaabah is surrounded by a marble rim or "half round" about two-and-a-half feet wide and one foot high, and into this a number of brass ringbolts are let, having a four-inch cotton rope passed through

them, to which the lower edge of the Kaabah cover is laced. There are three openings in this cover—one in the east end of the north side is a heavy bullioned curtain before the silver-plated door in the Kaabah, which is of ordinary size, about seven feet from the ground ; near this, but right on the corner of the building, is a round hole in the cover about five feet in circumference, and its lower border about two feet above the base rim of the Kaabah, showing a massive silver boss, with ears for securing it to the stone-work ; and set so deeply into this that the face is concealed by the silver rim when in the act of kissing it, is the Black Stone. This is about the size of a man's head, of a brownish-black, glassy substance, presenting rounded inequalities of surface, as if from fusion or fracture. There is a piece of obsidium from Hecla in the British Museum, its exact counterpart in shape and appearance, but about three times its bulk. So closely do they resemble one another, that after having carefully inspected both—and I lived for four months in sight of the Black Stone—I have no doubt whatever that the two are identical in substance. If I required anything to confirm the evidence of my senses, there is a belief that the Black Stone will float in water ; this most likely means that it is momentarily buoyant

after being thrown in, which might be true if it contained a great number of cavities or bubbles, as a piece of obsidium often does. And another general belief is that the stone is white, but that its surface has been blackened by defilement ; which led me to break the agate in a ring I wore in order to test it with a scratch, but the result showed it to be white like any other piece of coloured glass. There are two or three versions of the history of this stone, but the most generally received one is, that it is the angel who had charge of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden turned into stone for allowing them to be beguiled by the serpent into eating the "wheat," and that he will be restored at the Last Day.

In the south-east corner of the Kaabah there is another piece cut out of the cover about three feet high and eighteen inches wide, exposing one of the corner-stones of the building, a small oblong granite block, very much polished by the touchings it receives at the hands of the pilgrims every circuit while performing the tawaf. On the west side from the top of the Kaabah is a gold-plated spout, appearing from below to project about four feet from the building, to be about a foot wide and six inches high at the sides. The rain-water off the flat roof of the Kaabah is discharged through this, and when it rains

there is a free fight among the pilgrims to get under it and be doused. Considering the open-air character and the dimensions of the whole, the place is kept in a good state of order and repair, the whitewash and paint all appearing fresh and clean. The colours employed are black, mauve, Indian red, and yellow wash, each stone on the inside and much of the outer walls being painted one of these colours with, as it were, a system of avoiding anything like rule. There are also large whitewashed spaces on these walls occupied with chapters of the Koran, and the stones of the arches are painted like those in the walls, as are the stones in built pillars. The domed ceiling is cleanly whitewashed, and the plaster on the top and front of the arcades and buildings is kept in constant repair, while the whole place is cleaned out by gangs of sweepers twice a day, morning and evening. The reader will not have gathered from all these details the fine simplicity of the whole until reminded that the building occupies within its outer walls a space of eight-and-a-quarter acres.

The behaviour in the Haram is much better than in most other Mohammedan mosques. During the day crowds sit about or promenade under the shade of the arcades until a call to prayer, when all join in the regular worship lasting for about a quarter of an

hour, more or less, the noonday prayer being the longest. After sunset the lamps, 2860 in number, are lit, and many groups of pilgrims sit round private coloured lamps, which add greatly to the general brilliancy, until after the last evening prayer, when the Haram becomes deserted, no one being permitted to sleep inside the gates ; and all who are not actually employed in performing some act of prayer or devotion are turned out after this hour by the attendants of the Haram.

Jebel Nur, lying about four miles north-east of Meccah, is a steep conical hill rising some nine hundred feet above the sand-level, for the sand in the valley maintains a level of its own as water would. Looking at Jebel Nur from the south, it appears to be inaccessible from about two-thirds of the way up, the upper part seeming to be one solid oval rock, its sides projecting beyond the perpendicular ; but in the ascent, having reached this point, you pass round to the north side, where you see that it would have been impossible to ascend so far on that side, but find a somewhat difficult though perfectly practicable path leading to the summit. Half-way up this path there is a rain-pool in the rock, generally full at this season. Here you may perform your ablutions before ascending to the very apex of the cone, where a

small dome is erected over a fissure in the solid rocks, some eight feet long by three feet deep, said to have been made by a slip of the Angel Gabriel's delicate instrument, while performing the somewhat nice operation of removing the black spot (*sin*) from the heart of Mohammed preparatory to giving him his prophet's commission. There Mohammed received his first inspired message. Farther down on the south side are two small caves, in which Mohammed concealed himself at the time of his persecution in Meccah. Into one of these, when being pursued, Mohammed had just time to escape ere his pursuers came up and found a pigeon sitting over its nest at the entrance, and a spider's web woven across the mouth of the cave—a miraculous interposition which led them to believe that no one had entered lately. In the other cave, Mohammed and his friend Abubekr were sleeping concealed, when Abubekr awaking saw a serpent putting its head out of a hole to bite Mohammed. Rather than awake the prophet he put his own heel over the hole and was bitten. When Mohammed awoke he found his friend still keeping the serpent back with his heel, but nearly dead; whereupon he of course killed the serpent and cured his friend by a miracle. Both these events are generally said to have taken place on *Jebel Saur*,

another mountain to the south-east of Meccah, but I and my companions related these stories to one another in the very caves I speak of as having occurred in them.

Umrah lies in a valley, about four miles south-east of Meccah, is a deep pool or janlo, built round, about one hundred feet by fifty feet square. There are steps leading down to the water, in which the pilgrims wash; and it is looked upon as a sort of Pool of Siloam. This is said to have been one of Mohammed's favourite places of resort for prayer and meditation. He is said to have prayed there so long that his knees became stiff and hard and his muscles rigid. Most Arab and Hindi (i.e. stockingless) Mohammedans have a callosity on the outside of the left ankle, the effect of one of the most constant attitudes of prayer—sitting with the left foot tucked under them.

At all these places, and many others, the pilgrim may say a two-prostration prayer, and dole out his charity to the inevitable irrepressible Hejaz beggar. These beggars may be classed under two heads—the pauper pilgrim and the professional beggar. In Meccah the pauper pilgrim falls into obscurity, and so may be dropped for the present. The professional beggar luxuriates simply, and probably forms half

the Arab population. “Bakhshish, bakhshish!” they continually do cry. “Bakhshish!” roars the camel; “bakhshish!” brays the ass; “bakhshish!” yelps the cur, till, after passing through a stage where you fancy you hear nothing else, you get so accustomed to it that it costs you an effort of will to hear it. It is encouraged by the pilgrims, who make it a means of carrying out the letter of the prophet’s charitable commands; true generosity not being an Eastern trait. A large proportion of these beggars are Hindi; Turkish or Persian beggars being comparatively few; and a Malay beggar is never seen.

Every day all who will take the trouble to go can receive for the asking a bowl of soup, given by the High Sheréf, the hereditary head curl and religious authority of Meccah, who is assisted in administration by the Mufti, Kadis, and a council of Moulahs under the Turkish pacha, or governor, to whom final appeals in all disputed cases are brought.

The Turks can only be said to hold the country in military possession, garrisoning the towns and maintaining order in them. They have no control over the desert men, to whom they yearly pay a reluctant subsidy, which they have from time to time attempted to stop; but the tribes have thereupon

become unmanageable and closed the roads, and the Turks have found it expedient to continue payment.

It now wanted but two days to the going out to Mount Arafat. At this time, about six feet of the lower part of the Kaabah cover, which had become very ragged by pilgrims leaning against it, was raised all round and replaced by white calico, adding greatly to the effect by contrast with the black and gold. Pilgrims were now arriving in crowds ; all the great caravans had come in, the town was packed till there was scarcely standing room in some of the streets. I have only seen such dense crowding in such places as Gracechurch Street on a Lord Mayor's Show day. The crowd here, however, was very different. Everyone here was all yielding affability. The London rough—who thinks it the height of pleasantry to knock a gentleman's hat over his eyes, or jump on a lady's feet and tender the horsey advice of “Sit hon 'er 'ead” when she faints—had no representative here. Quarrelling of any kind is seldom seen in the streets, which is very creditable, considering the number of different nationalities and sects brought into close contact here, who elsewhere entertain the bitterest animosity against one another.

During the whole of my stay in Meccah I only

once saw serious fighting in the streets. Two Panjabis, tearing mad, were scratching and slapping one another, when one of the Turkish soldiers, who do police duty about the streets, went up to separate them. One of them turned on the Turk and slapped him. The Turk drew his sword-bayonet and smote the Panjabi a swinging slash on the neck, cutting the head half off. Turkish soldiers are never allowed out of barracks without their swords, which are always carried sharp.

CHAPTER IV.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE VARIOUS RACES MET WITH IN
MECCAH.

IF, at this time, the congregation in the Haram had been shaken together, well mixed, and then one hundred taken out and analysed, different nationalities would have been found in about the following proportions :

The races marked with an asterisk are mere general classifications, and might be made subject to innumerable subdivisions, as under the head of Hindi I include all the Mohammedan races of India, and under the Turks, Maghribis, and Syrians, I have allowed the Egyptians to fall.

All these different nationalities brought into contrast in this way give a good opportunity of comparing them one with another, and I may here give the impressions I received, first prefacing with the following stock yarn of the Mecca guide—one of those illustrative stories the Arabs are so fond of. It is told in justification of the bearing of Arabs and Bedawins towards foreigners at the present day, and, like so many of their stories, turns upon what may be called first original characters.

A Bedawi Shaykh, whom we will call Shaykh Salaam, and his whole establishment lived peacefully in the valley of Mecca, worshipped God, performed his prayers and ablutions five times daily, and was proportionably prosperous. When, in an evil hour, there came a Turkish pilgrim to his tent, Shaykh Salaam, with characteristic Arab hospitality, invited the stranger to enter, gave him the best of everything to eat, and allowed him to sleep in his tent. But on Shaykh Salaam's waking next morning he found that his wife had eloped with the Turk.

He had just finished thanking God that matters were no worse when along came a Persian pilgrim. To him the good Shaykh was even more hospitable than he had been to the Turk, and was repaid by the Persian's absconding in the night with his horse, and, the story continues, the Misri * stealing his camel, the Maghribi † his ass; until, what between charity and theft, he is left with nothing in the world but his little son, who falls a victim to the crime of the Sulaymani. Last of all there crawls up to him a wretched begging Hindi, to whom the good Shaykh tells his tale of woe—how he has been imposed on and himself left destitute—to say nothing of his being able to assist the wayfarer. Whereupon the Hindi turned round and blackguarded the good man as none but a Hindi knows how. This is more than even long-suffering Shaykh Salaam can stand, so he sallies forth and slays his reviler; and in the ragged cloth around the Hindi's loins he finds an immense treasure.

Besides the touches of character, the moral of the story is obvious, and I can vouch for the facts related having apparently opened the eyes of the Shaykh to a worldly wisdom which his descendants have inherited in a very marked degree.

* Egyptian.

† Moor.

First on the list comes the Turk. He certainly appears to advantage as the most civilised, clean, and sensible of them all ; bad as he is, he is as much superior to other Easterns as any European nation is to him. The Turks, as the ruling power, are hated and feared not only by their unwilling subjects, the natives of the Hejaz, but by all other Mohammedans, both on account of their adoption of European costume and their introduction of such Christian innovations as forks, chairs, and, it is whispered, even wine into the holy Meccah ; so that none allow them to be Mohammedans more than in name. They do not hesitate to increase their unpopularity, and by a high-handed and bullying carriage freely expressing their contempt for their unsophisticated and more primitive co-religionists. Individually I like the Turk, he is a manly brave little fellow. I never saw a Turkish soldier with his clean fighting uniform, shaven chin, and European accoutrements, but I felt a strong impulse to go and shake hands with him. I once did in English ask a red-haired, blue-eyed sentry : "How do you like the new rifle, old man ?" (the Turkish troops in the Hejaz had just been supplied with the Snider) but happily got only a vacant stare in reply. An Arab shopkeeper who professed to be up in statistics informed me that the

settled Turkish population numbered five thousand, which is probably near the mark; if so, more than two-thirds must belong to some branch of the military. The rest are merchants and well-to-do shopkeepers, dealing in cloth, tobacco, medicine, and European manufactures generally. This year the pilgrims from Turkey were said to be very few on account of the war, but they have never struck me as being a people likely to mortify themselves for conscience' sake to the extent of pilgrimising much at any time, for the modern Turk shows little respect for the practice of his faith even in Mecca. I have seen a Turkish officer cut across the corner of the Haram from gate to gate without taking his boots off—an unparalleled profanation, for which a Persian would have been mobbed and murdered on the spot.

The next in importance are the Arabs, sanctified Meccans, who honour you by accepting charity. Blustering, "frauds," swindlers to a man, trained from infancy to the robbing of the pilgrim-pigeon, inherited for an unknown number of generations,* they are perfect in every dodge and art of crimping and cadging. I have but one good word for them—they are clever and speak any language they hear.

* See historical accounts of Arabia.

Imagine yourself a perfect stranger in the hands of a population of Cairo dragomen and donkey-boys, only doubly as obtrusive as the first, and doubly as rude and discourteous as the latter, and you would be much in the same situation as a pilgrim paying his way through Meccah. Though this description applies to the great majority of shopkeepers and lodging-house keepers, many Arabs are artisans, since most of the mechanics in Meccah are either Hindi or Arab, the best being Arab gunsmiths, tinsmiths, or carpenters, from Egypt or Syria. They seem industrious, and turn out tolerably substantial work of the elaborately-ornamented and unfinished Eastern description, but preferable to the French "Brummagem" with which the shops are stocked. Imams, muezzins, and nearly all posts of religious and civil authority from the High Sheréf downwards, are held by Arabs. With them, however, I had no intercourse, nor had I any anxiety to make their acquaintance.

The settled Hindi population in Meccah, I was told, numbered thirty thousand; this may be an exaggeration, as my Arab informer would be likely to overrate the numbers to me, coming as I did from India; still the statement is possible, the Hindi element much exceeding, perhaps even doubling, the Arab, and the pilgrims from India almost equalling in number those from all

other parts of the East, except the Bedawin and Arab population of the country round, which must be almost depopulated on the day of assembling at Arafat. Many Hindis are in official employ, and hold lucrative, and a few even important, posts under the Government. There are also a number of wealthy and independent Hindis permanently settled in Meccah, some from religious motives, and a few for political reasons. They occupy also the following positions : readers of the Koran, professors of the law, agents for pilgrims, shopkeepers and tradesmen—for the wily cunning nature of the Hindi is quite able to compete with and hold its own against Arab roguery. In whatever position, they are all beggars from top to bottom—underhand, insinuating beggars ; the Arab demands bakhshish, the Hindi cringingly pleads for charity ; they form by great numbers the poorest and most miserable class to be found in Meccah : there seems no bottom to the depths of wretchedness and misery to which the Hindi can descend and live.

A good many pilgrims come from Afghanistan and enjoy a very evil repute in Meccah. They are all known by the name Sulaymani, whether true Afghans or of any of the other races inhabiting the country which is bounded by the frontiers of Persia, the Sulaymani range, the Oxus, and Beluchistan. This name Sulay-

mani is never uttered by an Arab unless coupled with the epithet "harami," a very comprehensive term, which, applied to the Bedawi, means merely "murderer and robber," a character of which he considers himself justly proud, but applied to the Sulaymani it has a different and very much worse signification.

The Malays come in great numbers, considering the long sea voyages from Java and even farther which they have to accomplish. So far as I could ascertain, the Malay permanent residents in Meccah are limited to but some half-dozen. It is known they never set out on a pilgrimage without sufficient funds to ensure their return, and it has become a byword among the Arabs that they never beg, and a common Arab expression, which may be freely translated "No humbug in the Malay," perfectly describes them. Quiet and fairly honourable in their dealings, yet close-fisted, they may be called the Scotchmen of the East, and are the most rational of the pilgrims, the only ones who understand managing the cantankerous Bedawin.

The Negro is to be found here in his proper place, an easily-managed, useful worker. The Negroes are the porters, water-carriers, and performers of most of the real labour in Meccah. Happy, healthy, well fed, well clothed (as such things go in Meccah),

they are slaves, proud of their masters, in a country where the slave is “honoured only after his master.” Slavery in the East has an elevating influence over thousands of human beings, and but for it hundreds of thousands of souls must have passed their existence in this world as wild savages, little better than animals ; it, at least, makes *men* of them, *useful men* too, sometimes even *superior men*. Could the Arab slave-trade be carried on with safety, it might be executed more humanely ; and it would, philanthropically speaking, do good to many of the human race, far above that heartlessly cruel coolie trade of India, where the ignorantly credulous natives are deluded by hopes never to be fulfilled into transportation half round the globe, to a country from which but few ever return, as they are led to believe they will by promises—a state of things compared to which Arab slave-trade is humane in the extreme. I have been an overseer on a sugar plantation in the West Indies, where three hundred of these coolies were employed, helpless droves of strangers in a strange land, worked in a manner killing to the feeble Hindi, for the most paltry remuneration out of which they must save enough to pay for the return passage. At the very most, one in ten again saw India, and these only the shrewd, independent

and clever ones—exceptional characters among the class of natives from which these coolies are drafted. It is in that country, too, where that abortive production of the *real* slave-trade, the civilised nigger, is met: that objectionable character, the “Wutless Badian,”* might be held up in contrast to his Meccan brother, showing the nigger as he is to be found and the nigger as he ought to be. No! my cheerful, contented slave shall not be seen in such disgraceful company as that depraved shameless creature.

Having been in the heart of the Arab slavery, I may, I hope, be permitted to offer my humble opinion on a rather important point, with all due deference to such of my “most potent, grave, and reverend signiors” as I may have the misfortune to differ from. “Are our attempts to abolish the slave-trade of Arabia likely to succeed?” “Are they at present producing good of any kind?” To both these questions I must answer “No”—most emphatically, “No.” While every settled town under Turkish or native rule in all wide Arabia has a slave-market to be stocked, our greatest efforts can but increase the demand and raise the markets. Witness: a strong male adult might be bought for

* Worthless Bardihan.—West Indian patois.

forty dollars four years ago in Meccah, and the same will now fetch sixty dollars. Were our cruisers doubled, the weekly landing of slaves among the creeks and reefs along the coast of the Hejaz could not be prevented. The embarking on the western shore, the crossing and disembarking on the eastern, need be but the work of three days under favourable circumstances, of which the Arab slaver knows well how to take advantage, as some naval men could testify, I think, if tales of more than one successful ruse told me by a Yemen Arab be true. What was before a legitimate peaceful trade has now become a dangerous adventure for the procurers of slaves, even the most unscrupulous and daring of their kind, and the ill-treatment practised on their cargoes necessarily increases with the danger of carrying them. A story told me by a Yemen "jacktar" will illustrate. A dhow in which he was serving had on board two Negroes, nominally slaves, who had for five months worked on board the dhow, and who, knowing when they were well off, would not have taken their liberty had it been offered them. She was a large Mascat babeela, bound down the Persian Gulf from Aber Shir to Bombay. On the day after clearing the Straits of Ormuz, in a calm, they sighted an English man-of-war steaming

towards them, as they well knew with the intention of boarding. The two Negroes would have been enough to condemn their craft, which meant ruin to some and misfortune more or less to every man of the crew, so they killed them and threw them overboard ; here my informer regretted the necessity which compelled them to this, mainly because they were both very strong men and very hard to kill, blaming those "Shaitan" English, and barging them in choice Arabic, though they did not confiscate his craft ; and I have no doubt the lieutenant and interpreter found everything very satisfactory on board her half-an-hour after what must have been rather an exciting scene.

That there are evils in Arab slavery I do not pretend to deny, though not affecting the Negro, once a slave. The exacting slave-driver is a character wholly unknown in the East, and the slave is protected from the caprice of any cruel master in that he is transferable and of money value. The man who would abuse or injure his slave would maim and wilfully deteriorate the value of his horse. Whatever the Arab may not know, he most assuredly knows what is to his own immediate interest better than that. And the Negro himself,

though he possesses the moral senses in the merest rudimentary form, has the instincts of self-preservation from physical hurt most highly developed, and he may through this medium be raised from a savage, existing only for the moment (a state above which he has not capacity for if left to himself), to a profitable member of society, a strong tractable worker, the position Nature seems to have made him to occupy.

I know of the abuses practised in the countries where the slaves are procured, and we must have other Livingstones ere they will cease, but one step towards the abatement of them would be the recalling of our police *de l'univers* from those unhealthy coasts, when labour would again become almost a drug in the Arab market and the traffic assume a more moderate and less barbarous form. We are at this moment opposing the immemorial customs and religious principles of totally distinct and independent races—customs not only almost harmless to all, but actually beneficial to thousands—with a sword worthy of Antient Islam itself. The only effect of this will be to produce permanently a new and horrible form of this slave-trade, if it has not already done so, and the expending

of thousands of pounds and hundreds of valuable lives, for a sentiment, in doing so. Let us hope that those in authority will take a reasonable view of the matter, and issue another Slave Circular, applicable to the peculiarities of the case, and not meet the fate of the former rapidly extinguished spark of official intelligence ; or, if England must be international monitor, then—as the nigger says : “ If you do a t’ing, do a t’ing”—annex Arabia, blow up Meccah, and reform the world ; but don’t continue to figure a petty plundering pirate to the 180,000,000 of its Mohammedan inhabitants.

I must apologise for having been carried off into this tirade, and return calmly to the proper subject of my narrative.

Besides these slaves, there are many free Negroes, labourers and keepers of stalls in the bazaars. The attendants of the Kaabah are Negro eunuchs, whose duties are to keep order among the worshippers, serve out materials for the trimming and lighting of the lamps to the volunteers who are never wanting to perform these and other like duties. The Kaabah itself is washed out once a year by these attendants alone. They possess a kind of sanctity by virtue of their office, and carry long wands with which they make very free play among the refractory or crowding

pilgrims, and are veritable jacks-in-office. There is also a scattering of Negro pilgrims from most Mohammedan countries.*

The Persians move rather under a cloud in Meccah on account of their unorthodox doctrines, keep very much to themselves, and pray together in parties. I believe they nearly all come by land, and many of them on horses which they bring with them. They are necessarily well conducted while in Meccah, and appear to be a quiet and inoffensive lot, and are as good hands at a bargain as any. There cannot be many Persian residents in Meccah, though there are a good many itinerant dealers and speculators in precious stones and hawkers of dried fruit.

Maghribis are the Arabs of the whole of North Africa, a mal-odorous brawling horde, principally remarkable for neglect of the practices of their faith, especially ablution. The Moorish magician exists (but let us hope, for the credit of the Oriental novelist, in a very degenerate form), and a great deal of faith is placed in the charms these Maghribis profess to work, especially by the Hindis. I myself

* Especially Jumallis, to whose earnest, childlike faith Mohammedanism is *fetisch*.

underwent an exorcism, for the curing of a large boil on my forehead, at the hands of a hoary old thief, recommended to me by the “third warrior.” It consisted in squeezing and stroking my head and shoulders, at the same time muttering incantations with closed eyes and many minor gesticulations, drawing mystic signs and strange devices mingled with the written names of God and Mohammed on a small piece of paper, then soaking it in a solution of common salt (so far as I could make out) with which I afterwards washed the boil ; and I must record here either as a coincidence or a curious result, that the swelling certainly did subside without breaking in about three days, when I was obliged to admit it cured and pay one dollar as agreed.

I have given the Syrians a place in the list, but they are only distinct from many others in that they come from Syria. I have not been to Damascus, but should imagine the population there must present almost as heterogeneous a collection, and as many varieties of the human race, as Meccah itself. Among the Syrians I must not omit to mention the sword-sharpeners, numbers of whom are to be seen following their trade in the bazaars of Meccah during the pilgrim season. They bring their somewhat large knife-

grinding machines on their backs from Syria, their only "impedimenta."

The Bedawi in Mecca is very much out of his element. He slinks about with a hang-dog, surprised look, and returns the push and curse of the Turkish soldier with a sulky scowl. The mean-spirited Bengali, who would go into a nervous paroxysm if he met the Bedawi in the desert, crowds past him in the bazaar with impunity, though the Bedawi is, I can assure you, a very different customer at home.

Tartars and Bokharans—powerful, well-built races of very large men with Russian complexions and rosy cheeks—come the whole pilgrimage on foot from the most remote parts of Central Asia, some occupying five and six months on the journey. They perform all minor pilgrimages most assiduously, and are never to be seen riding donkeys on such occasions as other pilgrims. They go about enveloped in their thick woollen garments on the most scorching day in the desert, and are as dirty as any others or dirtier.

The last on the list are the nondescript rabble from China, the West Coast of Africa or Russia, and wild Darwaysh savages from God knows where. The Darwayshes are not to be confounded with the professional beggar or pauper pilgrims; they are *bond fide* religious mendicants, passing their lives in

prayer and devotion, subsisting entirely on charity, and having no home ; to abuse or hit one of these would be a most unholy act. They dress in as remarkable and eccentric a manner as they can, and behave outrageously ; most of them affecting madness. A Negro Darwaysh, with his amulets of talismans and relics, and festoons of knuckle-bones, stones, and rags, would fetch entire the value of his full weight in a marine store-shop. All of them carry a staff, and a half gourd which they thrust forward to high and low for alms ; and he would be a bad Mohammedan who would refuse to give at least something, be it ever so small, to one of these when solicited. These with their companions in the list may be disposed of in two words—mangy mongrels.

Having now reached the bottom of the scale of humanity, I will, while my hand is in, pass on to—I am afraid I cannot in justice to the brutes say downwards to—a description of the remaining animal life to be found in Meccah.

CHAPTER V.

THE REMAINING ANIMAL AND VEGETABLE LIFE AND MECCAH ITSELF.

THE camel has no hump. Well, not exactly that ; but the hard-worked, ill-conditioned camel of the Hejaz has very little hump, a mere slight elevation of the dorsal ridge, more thickly clothed with wool than the rest of the body, over which the saddle fits. The saddle is a long bag of coarse sacking about the thickness of a large pillow and twice the length of the camel's back ; when put on it is doubled round above the tail and the ends kept together at the shoulders by a wooden fixture constructed much on the same principle as our pack-saddles. This huge ungainly brute is endowed with a stupidity and helplessness perfectly pitiable, and its temper is diabolical. While being laden it gives vent to spuming, spluttering, bellows and whines not unlike what the roars of

an enraged croupous lion might be supposed to be. I never recall to my mind a camel, but I picture it biting, or trying to bite something, an operation for which its peculiar dental arrangement well adapts it. It never loses an opportunity of biting anything it dares bite, and it dares bite anything but a Bedawi : some will even occasionally venture a sly nibble at their masters, by whom they are brutally treated. They are seldom to be seen without saddle sores, raw ulcers as often covering a surface of feet as inches, and they always die in harness. Though the camel if allowed will drink freely twice a day, I have myself ridden them three days from water to water, during which their great sufferings were most evidently exhibited. In some places the road, over an otherwise trackless plain, was literally marked out by lines of their bleached skeletons ; many hundreds of which I have seen, and have often pulled the huge bones apart. The camel's pace in caravan is about two-and-a-half miles an hour, and a fair load a quarter of a ton ; they may be hired for one-and-a-half dollars a day. This hire varies somewhat with circumstances, and the average price of a camel ranges from thirty dollars to sixty dollars, but there are, of course, fancy prices given for first-rate animals. The Turkish Government use the Egyptian camel, which is a third

and much stronger variety than either of the Hejaz camels, though I have been told it has not the same endurance. Altogether camels are more numerous in the Hejaz than in any other part of the East to which I have been. I estimated, so far as such a thing was possible, that there could not have been less than sixty thousand assembled on the plain of Arafat on the day of the celebration there.

The Hejaz can scarcely be called a country of horses at all, as there are few to be found other than those of the Turkish mounted troops. These are the well-known hardy little Arabs, good horses at their worst. They are never groomed, and they are badly shod; their hoofs are not pared, and consequently present some curious malformations—but that Nature has given the Arab an abnormally perfect foot, the coronet or pastern might be the point of contact with the ground. “No frog; no foot” is most assuredly not one of the many saws common to both East and West, for here when the shoe, which is a flat plate of iron with a small hole in the centre, is removed, it invariably discloses the frog in a high state of decay. There are a few horses of the finer Arab kinds belonging to rich Arabs. A good Meccan gentleman’s riding - horse can be purchased for one hundred dollars. A few horses—a very few,

I think I saw three—are owned by the Bedawin, and they must be hardy brutes indeed to live at all under the treatment they experience. The marked traits of the Hejaz horse generally are its inability to trot or leap, its even temperament, steady nerve, and a knack of lying down with you like a camel, after having been kept standing for a time.

The donkey of the Hejaz is, I think, peculiar to that country. I am not aware that I have seen the variety anywhere else; it is totally different from the Egyptian. In form it may be said to take the place among donkeys of the Flemish horse among horses; exceedingly powerful to look at, but with this difference—it is a “good ‘un to go,” and very willing, though, like most donkeys, it “steers aft.” Its colour is white, with the black markings very clearly defined. A good donkey may be bought for about thirty dollars. Caravans of them between Meccah and Jeddah start nightly after sunset, and reach their destination before daylight, a distance of over forty miles, either carrying men or heavily laden. Donkeys are said to last three years at this work, and when no longer fit for it, are valued very highly as private riding donkeys, on account of the working habits they have acquired. There is also a small black variety, not nearly so common as the white

one. I saw no donkeys in the Hejaz with rough coats, or of the common mouse colour.

The mule, always by large jackasses, is a very fine animal here, and though the mare is seldom over fourteen hands, the mule often stands that height. I was told of a jackass in Medinah as big as a horse, but did not see it when I was there, though I have seen them in Meccah very big indeed.

I saw no cows or oxen of any kind, but was told they existed. I am inclined to account for this on the supposition that they are a transparent description of lean kine, browsing, as they must, on a pasturage of sand, small stones, and dead gooseberry bushes; the more so as the sheep and goats which I did see can be called little more than semi-opaque, and might be driven about the dark lanes of Meccah at night, with lighted candles inside them, to advantage.

There are many varieties of sheep and goats in the Hejaz—close-haired, straight-horned sheep like goats, and woolly, curly-horned goats like sheep, so that the mass of fat round the root of the tail in the sheep is really the only distinguishing mark; this not unusually weighs as much as six or eight pounds. The price of a sheep or goat ranges, according

to its size and condition, from one dollar to five dollars.

All the domestic animals are branded, the horses and sheep moderately, but camels and donkeys are sometimes seamed and scarred from head to foot in all manner of fanciful devices most painful to see, reminding one of periods of torture through which the animals must have passed. I have seen a Bedawi engaged for more than an hour on the skin of a camel with a red-hot iron.

Canine scavengers are as numerous and interesting in Meccah as in Constantinople or anywhere else in the East, and notwithstanding their numbers, the great heat, and scarcity of water, rabies is almost unknown. I heard vague rumours of a hunting-dog to be found in the country, but never came across it.

Cats abound, and are lank, large-eared, and small-headed.

The monkeys in this country are, without exception, the most grotesque, quaint little creatures of their kind. I once came upon a pack of about five of these doglike little monkeys on Jebel Nur, and found them very tame, though much too wide awake to allow themselves to be caught. Stories told by the Arabs of their thieving and imi-

tative propensities entirely lack point, unless you grant the beasts, as a matter of course, great reasoning powers. I know it is universally accepted as a fact that monkeys can talk, but will not, for fear they should be made to work; though I believe this to be but badly authenticated by the unsupported evidence of only one sailor, who stated that he roasted a live monkey in an oven till it cried out, "Could any mortal man stand this?" However, be it known, on the indisputable authority of an "intelligent native," that a sage Shaykh of Arabia satisfactorily settled that question ages ago when monkeys could talk, which they cannot do now. One Shaykh Ali brought twelve monkeys into a yard—you are to suppose these a primal Shaykh and primal monkeys, the progenitors of all Shaykhs and all monkeys: (this is a very favourite groundwork to any piece of thoroughly reliable Eastern history). Well, Shaykh Ali went up to the first of the dozen monkeys and pointing to a stone, addressed it something in this style: "Now then, I want you to move along that stone, or, much as I may regret it, I shall have to make a decapitated ape of you; come, walk round, exhibit, show the ladies your agility, Alhamdulelah Hurryup Alak Akbar." But the artful beast remained inattentive and apparently

preoccupied—a way they have. Quoth the Shaykh : “ My conviction is that that’s altogether too logical a lie. Bismallah ! ” and whipped off its head, and so on through the lot till he came to the twelfth, an *enceinte* lady he had considerably spared till last, which got up and walked away with the stone without being asked ; explaining that now it was the last of its race it did not mind confessing it could talk, but swore that the accomplishment should die with it. “ May dogs defy your great-grandmother’s beard ! ” said the Shaykh. “ Certainly,” said the monkey ; but it taught none of its progeny the faculty of speech. I wonder if it is true ! There are a great many of these little baboons kept as pets in Meccah ; sometimes they are tied in the doorways and make very good gatekeepers ; there could be few things much more amusing than to see one of these little men objecting to a stranger. I can understand their having been quite “ the rage ” at Jerusalem in Solomon’s time.

Rats and mice swarm.

There are eagles in the country, as a Bedawi once tried to sell me a large pair of wings ; and hawks of many species are numerous.

Vultures and kites wheel in circles over all in-

habited localities, or share the carrion, of which there is no lack, with the ravens and crows.

Fowls are plentiful, though eggs are rather dear, seldom being less than a piastre for four.

Desert grouse, partridges, and quails are brought to the bazaars by Bedawi children, who snare them and knock them over with sticks.

Blue-rock pigeons are to be seen here in large numbers such as are probably not to be met with elsewhere. I amused myself for some time by counting smaller flocks and comparing them with larger, so estimating the number to be seen at one time in the Haram, which could not have been less than between five and six thousand. They are so tame that they feed freely from the hand. The reason of this extreme fearlessness is that they are held to be almost sacred, more so than any other Meccan animal (unless, perhaps, the swallow). They are considered the property of the Haram, and are, I believe, never killed.* I have occasionally gone out into the

* I heard no reason given for the special favour shown to these birds, and suppose that they, sharing with all other Meccan creatures a common immunity from harm, have by their nature merely accommodated themselves in the way they have to the favourable circumstances.

Haram to feed these birds, after the manner of the pilgrims, who purchase baskets of mixed and damaged grain sold for the purpose. The moment you leave the pavement you become the vortex of a revolving storm of pigeons, the air taking a leaden hue above and about you, while the view is completely obscured by the cloud of birds, and the grain is whisked out of your basket, and your clothes whirled about by the wind from their wings. The noise is deafening, and you are glad to empty your basket and escape. Or I have sometimes sat down in the middle of the turmoil, and let the birds light on me and struggle over me, the ground for yards round paved two or three deep with their fluttering bodies ; when the grain is finished they disperse over the square or to the neighbouring bazaars. I observed among these birds a number of interesting varieties curiously like our commoner domestic varieties. My attention was called to this, shortly after my arrival in Meccah, by seeing a jacobin-looking specimen, which I afterwards saw always in the same flock, as I knew by the number of birds composing it. This bird I at first supposed to be distinct, but I afterwards ascertained that no pigeons were to be found in the district other than wild ones ; and indeed where every house has its sitting bird in some room or another (in one room I

saw as many as five nests with eggs or young ones in them, on niches placed high up in the wall apparently for that purpose); any attempt to introduce a permanent variety would be a failure, as it would soon be absorbed into the more numerous stock. I saw many in which the bars on the wings and tail were single, reduced to a mere blotch on one or two feathers, or absent altogether; while a strawberry tinge across the back is not at all uncommon. The tumbling peculiarity of one of our pigeons is to be seen, and appears to be used as a means of suddenly stopping to alight during swift flight. As these birds have existed in their present state probably for centuries, such varieties can scarcely result from occasional temporary introductions of distinct kinds, and are more likely to have been developed naturally in the condition in which the birds live.

The swallows are held in the greatest regard, and are allowed to build in the Haram. The beautiful Saracenic arch, about fifty feet high, forming the Gate of Abraham, is completely disfigured by the masses of mud composing clusters of their nests. This respect for the swallows is held on account of a belief that they were the instruments by which Meccah was saved from an Abyssinian army in the same year as Mohammed's birth. The tradition is

that God sent these birds with three small stones each, one in the beak and two in the claws, which they dropped on the heads of the Abyssinians, and which miraculously penetrated the bodies of men and elephants to the ground till only one of the invaders was left alive, who fled back to his own country, and had just finished telling the news to his king when one of the swallows, which he had observed following him overhead from Meccah, dropped its stone and killed him.

It occurred to me, as a possible explanation, that if a swallow had been seen to drop one of the particles of mud they carry to make their nests, this, together with a sudden panic, might have given rise to a fiction that would have been quite a solid foundation for such a piece of history in the East, but I have since come across the subjoined note in Syed Ameer Ali's "Life of Mahammed" (Williams and Norgate. London, 1873).*

To the statement in the note at the foot of

* The account of this event exemplifies well how legends grow among uncultured nations. The invaders were destroyed by some pestilential epidemic, probably small-pox ; and the word *al-hasabat*, which signifies "pustules," also signifying "small stones," the origin of the legend that the army was destroyed by stones showered from heaven can easily be traced.

page 116, I may add that if a Sepoy army were to encamp in the valley of Meccah to-morrow it would be quite in the ordinary course if a week hence it had not a man capable of doing "sentry go" from pustules—the Meccah disease which I have already alluded to.

The above tradition had matured into its present form, and was recorded during the life of Mohammed as a fact.

The cosmopolitan little house-sparrow twitters on your window-sill here, as where does it not?

A few small birds of the fly-catcher family are to be found in the desert.

Snakes are all over the country, though nowhere very numerous or large; some are very venomous indeed. One of our party was bitten on the toe by one which had escaped; by the man's description of its appearance it was a yellow-and-black spotted slender snake, about eighteen inches long, and he almost succumbed to the bite, remaining insensible for about three hours, nor did he recover the shock for some weeks.

There are a few large lizards among the rocks; and a little yellow fellow who frequents the houses amused me for what would have been many a weary hour, watching him hunting flies on the ceiling.

Scorpions, tarantulas, spiders, centipedes, and all creeping creatures, abound.

Cockroaches an inch-and-a-half long may be brought to bay in any corner, or stalk past you with a contemptuous wave of a three-inch antenna.

Clouds of locusts cross the country at times, and are always more or less abundant. The Arabs eat them, the children looking upon them as a great treat, buying halfpenny-worths of the men who hawk them about the streets in baskets very suggestive of "sh-r-imps," to which they do bear a distant resemblance, both in the shape of their bodies, their great percentage of legs and spines, and in taste, which is rather fishy and very oily. I gave them a fair trial, but could not bring myself to like them, apart from the idea they are not good eating. I was told the Arabs caught them by setting fire to the dry vegetation over which they were flying, or among which they had alighted, and so suffocating them by camel-loads. When caught in this way they receive no other cooking than the slight scorching and smoking of the light fire into which they fall.

The honey of wild bees is to be bought in the bazaars for about five piastres a pound.

A few butterflies are to be met with in the

sylvan (?) districts, and moth doth corrupt "the worst kind" in the urban.

Carrion flies of every description are a pest in Meccah, though not equalling the perpetual fly plague of Egypt.*

Mosquitoes are troublesome, but there are many worse places than Meccah for mosquitoes, so I will not ask my most incredulous reader to "strain at my gnat."

All other carnivorous, man-eating invertebrates infest the place, and rare feeding-ground they find it.

This finishes the somewhat limited fauna of Meccah, nor do I think I have omitted to mention a single creature that came under my notice.

The flora is not quite so limited as the fauna.

Though the general appearance of the country is bare rock or sandy desert, there is no part absolutely without a little vegetation. In some places there are large savannahs of coarse grass like long stubble, and in others small jungles of gorse and broom-like growths (not in the least like gorse or broom on close inspection, only presenting the same appear-

* Probably the flies inoculate the stranger with the Meccah disease, as the sores only appear on the skin of the uncovered parts of the body.

ance in the landscape)—all good grazing for camels, for the camel munches greedily large mouthfuls of desert thorns, the spikes of which make stilettos used for embroidering, and compared to which a white brier in December would be a luscious morsel, a birch-broom a delicate tid-bit.

In the most arid and rocky parts small stunted shrubs crop up here and there, enough to support a few sheep and goats; among these an absynthine plant, one of the favourite adornments of the filthy fakir, deserves mention for its remarkably sweet scent and delightfully fresh greenness. The whole of the surrounding country is dotted over with widely-dispersed spots of most thorough fertility where almost anything can be grown—wheat, dates, apples, or oranges. These places are assiduously cultivated, and send a great variety of fruit to the market.

The water-melons and pomegranates are perhaps the best in the world. One kind of pomegranate has the seeds so soft that they may be eaten with pleasure. A much-worn green dye is procured by a simple process from the skin of the pomegranate. This colour in Meccah is not worn exclusively by the Kuraysh,* nor is it looked upon as the mark of

* Descendants of the family of Mohammed.

a three-pilgrimage pilgrim, as has been said by some writer.

Vegetables are dear, though nearly every kind but potatoes and cabbages is grown.

The thorny acacia and tamarisk supply firewood and small timber. Beams and rafters are made of the split trunk of the date tree, and laths for roofing from its fronds.

I suppose I should be doing something unprecedented were I to write a book, however small, on Arabia and say nothing about dates ; and I admit myself rather puzzled to think of something to say about them that everybody does not know. Dates are the staple article of food in Meccah, though bread runs them very close. Still I have scarcely ever seen bread eaten without dates, and I have often seen dates eaten without bread ; so dates may be allowed to be the staff of life here. There are many kinds ; but of whatever quality, they are a trifle dearer than the same would be in London. At times, and in places, the streets of Meccah are almost laid with date-stones. Painful-looking old women and miserable Hindi beggars gather these and sell them, for they have, in quantities, a considerable value, being about the most nutritious fodder the country affords for milch-camels or sheep ; a few hours' soaking in water softening

them so as to be easily masticated. The largest and best-coloured stones are carefully sorted out and sold to be turned on the lathe into rather pretty beads. Meccah producing nothing itself depends on external sources even for its dates.

Most of the gardens are said to lie in the direction of Tayf, a town three days' journey east of Meccah, which I did not visit. It is the sanatorium of Meccah, where many of the rich Meccans spend the months of August and September (the season at Tayf), "living on grapes and honey among cool breezes," as I heard it put. Besides the produce of Arabia great quantities of fruit and vegetables are imported from Egypt, and timber from Burmah.

Though I do not know the mast from the gun in geology, so to speak, a man must indeed have gone through a country like this blindfold not to have observed the wonderfully rapid changes in the surface of the land so palpably in process under your very eyes. If the reader remembers, on our way to Meccah, we journeyed over some twenty-eight miles of sandy plain, from the sea to the beginning of a rocky region. This border extends up and down the entire coast of the Hejaz, and is, on a fair average, about thirty miles across.

I have at different times travelled over probably

four hundred miles of this part of the country, and found it everywhere of the nature of a dry sea - beach. On entering this most unpromising desert from inland, before you are five miles past the last ridge of rock, you will pick up a decayed fragment of the shell of some flinty old bivalve, and ere long you will find yourself passing over beds of bleached and rotten sea-shells. Turn your camel from the beaten track, and there will be a crunching under foot as though walking over "afternoon-tea" cups. As you advance over this all but perfectly barren waste, you will find everywhere similar indications, immense tracts of large water-worn pebbles, or ditto of small shingle and tiny shells set to a hardness like conglomerate rock ; and, overlying these, another feature will be miles in area of dusty shifting sand, stirred up by the lightest breeze ; or at the bottom of some gentle long undulation you may come upon a crust of fine light clay two or three inches thick—a greasy yellow slough yesterday in the shower, and in the solar oven of to-day baked hard as pot, cracked and seamed like the enamel on old china, with all the little segments loosened from their beds and some of them curled up into positive drain-pipes. In such places the camels have "a hard road to travel," for, when

it is wet, they slip and sprawl about on it and often sprain themselves badly, and when dry the hard curled-up cakes break under their weight and cut their feet. In either case, if lamed so as to be unable to keep up with the rest, "their throats are cut to save their lives." As you draw nearer to the sea the shells become noticeably harder and have not the mother-o'-pearl scaled off them, and you may traverse hard black marly patches covered with a white saline efflorescence like hoar-frost. Even here something will grow. Every two or three hundred yards a little green plant, an inch or two high, or small bed of violet-flowered vetches, quite startling as seen beneath your camel on the eye returning from glaring painfully over a hot waste of glittering plain with nothing more substantial to obstruct the view than a few curling sand-pillars flitting about an uncertain horizon in little whirlwinds. These are always most numerous on the hottest days, when the discomfort is too great to admit of your taking any interest in them; but if seen towards evening their rapid movements and changing forms may be watched with great interest, and you may chance to see the description of the poet realised :

Before my dreamy eye
Stretches the desert with its shifting sand,
Its unimpeded sky.

And, borne aloft by the sustaining blast,
This little golden thread
Dilates into a column high and vast,
A form of fear and dread.

And onward, and across the setting sun,
Across the boundless plain,
The column and its broader shadow run,
Till thought pursues in vain.

LONGFELLOW.

I cannot swear that I ever did reach the sea, except at Jeddah, not having actually felt the water elsewhere; and at the other points on the coast, where I came nearest to it, sandpits and growing reefs blended into shallows and retreating creeks in such a way that there was really no defined junction of land and water; and besides, in places like this, the mirage is so constant and plays such extraordinary freaks that a man would be a fool to believe his eyes.

So much for the superficial deposits of the coast, a good deal of which is not geology, I am afraid, and has led me wandering from Meccah. The nature of the strata!—save the mark!—its rocks are about as much stratified as are the various components in a

bowl of Scotch broth. For the materials of which the hills about Meccah are composed, I suppose there is not a possible mineral combination, plutonic, metamorphic, or eruptive, of which a specimen could not be procured from the hills of Meccah. How a geologist would revel in it! A mangled limb of old mother earth, compound comminuted fracture, bones protruding, exposing the very marrow of the world; or better, call them skeletons of mountains, around you on every side pile after pile of naked rocky ribs falling apart, crumbling to pieces as you look at them, burying themselves in their own *débris*, fantastic ruins, the sides clothed with fragments of themselves, to be cast off only to make room for others, and help to swell the level plain, creeping steadily up like an ocean tide. Of all the countries in the world in which I have been I have beheld not conditions so favourable for rapid disintegration of rock as the sudden extremes of heat and cold of this part of Arabia, and I never (not even in an earthquake) so fully realised having seen Nature at work as when I felt I had caught her in the act, reducing those iron rocks. I have slept at night on them: I may here mention in passing that I should be very much surprised if it had been recorded of Jacob, that he, similarly situated, did not have a

bad dream, "pace" of the serious reader. I have lain on those rocks on a chilly night and heard them crack and felt the dust from them fall on my face.

Sitting one day on a hill about one hundred and fifty feet high, perhaps a mile or so to the west of Meccah, half round the base of which passes a road called the Sultan's Road, I noticed on the plain below a formation which struck me as very curious and set me speculating. All along the side of the road opposite to the hill, from the point where the road first touched the hill to the point where it left it—a distance of about four hundred yards—extended as symmetrical a stone-heap as ever lay by the side of an English highway, but of Brobdingnagian proportions, about fifteen feet high and fifty feet across; between it and the hill ran a smooth beaten camel-path wide enough for two laden camels to pass one another.

I soon guessed the way in which this stone-heap had been made. Bedawin, as they walk along leading their camels, throw out of the path all stones over a certain size which would be likely to hurt the feet of the camels if trodden on by them unexpectedly, and in this way this vast heap had been formed. To prove it I took

the trouble to push a few stones down into the road, and the very next Bedawi who came past gave me the satisfaction of seeing him do a share in a public work of collecting all the pieces of stone larger than a walnut that fell from the hill, and depositing them in a heap by themselves. If, as its name seems to imply, this road has been made since the Turkish occupation of the Hejaz, the hill, other things considered, looks to have shed about one-tenth of its entire bulk in three hundred years.

Of the many other interesting workings of Nature on an unusual scale in this country, I have seen a sand-storm, by forming drifts, alter a landscape in a few hours ; and the triturating action on the rocks of this sand—with which the air is so loaded during any fresh breeze as to give the appearance of a yellow fog—is very considerable, as all the harder nodules of stone lying in the valleys are rounded on their upper surfaces, as though water-worn from this cause.

A rain-storm raised the valley of Mecca six inches (of which a description will be given in due course). I have seen a mound of sand one hundred feet high in the open desert, for which I could not account, unless it were a tenable theory that it had

accumulated round some such nucleus as the growths over a spot fertilised by a dead body.

But now I think enough has been said to illustrate the extraordinary rate at which geologic change goes on over the surface of this country, and possibly to prepare you to agree that "Araby the Blest" may not have been quite such a fabulous country after all. Say five thousand years ago, after having passed through the first stages of natural change in which, as geologists tell us, the finer soil forming particles from the rocks would have been brought down to the well-watered lower levels, might it not be in accordance with scientific principles if Arabia had been a country of richly fertile valleys?—how much so may be judged from the almost rank productiveness of any place where the water is not too deeply buried under sand and stones even at this day.

I will not say how rich I believe the Hejaz to be in metals, because, understanding nothing of mineralogy, my opinion would be worth little. I know, however, as a matter of fact, that gold is procured by the Bedawin, and that there is in Meccah a large sale of precious stones which are found in the country; moreover, the Arabia of the ancients is also the Arabia of the Scriptures—then why should these concurrent testimonies be doubted? For my part

I think it most likely that the gardens and lakes of Arabia have, in the course of nature and during the historic era, been buried under the ruins of its mountains. The often-quoted explanation, which accounts for the difference between the Arabia of to-day and the Arabia known to Solomon, and described by the ancients on the supposition that they were designedly misled by the Egyptians and Phœnicians, who themselves traded only in the wealth of India, seems to me to be utterly feeble.

The dollar called "riyal," in which I have given all the prices, is, with the English pound (called "jinni") and the Turkish piastre, the standard currency of the country: though every gold and silver coin known can be readily changed. The most common and most preferred dollar is the Austrian Maria Theresa, and I noticed that although they were all dated about 1790, such a great proportion of them looked new, that I fancy they must have been struck since that date, if they are not now being coined somewhere. The only copper coins current are the Turkish piastre and parts of a piastre, so that as pilgrims bring only gold and silver, they find a great scarcity of small change, and the shopkeepers can refuse to sell if you offer to pay

with a coin worth more than three times the value of the article to be purchased. The money-changers charge an unvarying rate of a half piastre in the dollar.

The shops are of the ordinary Eastern description. A low platform facing the street, on which samples of the wares are exposed, behind which the dealer sits in a room containing the bulk of his merchandise. The bazaars do not follow the rule, as in other Eastern countries, of all shops in the same line of business being collected in the same locality; the order being oftener—a dealer in European commodities, a fruiterer, a baker, and a gunsmith, or anything else, the butchers being the only dealers who stick to a particular market-place. All things considered, order and honesty are kept up to a wonderful degree in Meccah, theft being not nearly so common as might be expected. No indications of female profligacy are publicly observable, and, apart from existing legislative prohibitions, would not indeed be tolerated by the pilgrims. Spirits or wine are not to be procured by the uninitiated outsider, though I did meet with one adventurous Egyptian speculator, who was making a good thing out of Eau-de-Cologne, selling it as a "medicine for head or heart ache," to be taken internally; until

it was discovered to be a spirit, when all his stock was thrown into the street and his bottles smashed by the mob, the owner only escaping with his life. The water, which is very bad, is plentiful—that is to say, can always be got for a price.

The sanitary condition of the place is wonderful, considering what a cesspool the valley of Meccah really is, there being no outlet whatever from the valley for the sewage, which must percolate down into the wells; and I strongly suspect that the water of the well Zem Zem owes much of its virtue to ammonia, it being in the centre of the city and at the lowest level in the valley.

Notwithstanding the general squalor, unhealthy condition, and indescribable filthiness of the place, I believe no very great plague is known to have visited Meccah. This might be accounted for by the exceeding dryness and clearness of the atmosphere, in which dead flesh generally dries without decomposing, and the facts that the majority of the population are men who have been in a physical condition which has enabled them to perform a long journey—consequently much-enfeebled constitutions among the great mass are rare; and that the pilgrim frame of mind is such as to render

him not liable to disease, for, if faith works the wonders accredited to it, there should be few sick men in Meccah. Another, and perhaps the main, reason is that famine, the usual precursor of pestilence, cannot reach Meccah, since there is no great lower class in absolute destitution; the thousands seen begging are "beggars at a fair," reaping the yearly harvest of supplies and wealth brought by the pilgrims. It is not surprising that Mohammedans attribute the comparatively small rate of mortality among the community to a perpetual miraculous interposition of Providence in behalf of "Meccah the inviolable." The climate is subject to occasional heavy downpours of rain in the winter months, seldom lasting longer than a few hours. The temperature is extremely variable. I have sat at night shivering, fingers blue and teeth chattering with cold, and have been on the afternoon of the same day scorched by the dry heat till my lips cracked. I often wished for a thermometer, which would have shown some curious fluctuations. I am convinced that the shade temperature would at times have ranged from 40° to 100° Fahr. in twenty-four hours.

The history of Meccah shows it to have passed

through fully its share of the exigencies of flood, fire, and sword. The pilgrimage to Meccah and almost all the ceremonies connected with it were ancient customs of the Arabs at the time of Mohammed, and were believed by him to be of Divine origin, and so adopted into his faith.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PILGRIMAGE.

FRIDAY, December 14th, 1877, was the day of standing to Arafat. The pilgrimage coming off on Friday is called the "Greater Pilgrimage," and is attended by far greater numbers than in an ordinary year. On December 13th, all the gathering of nations which had hitherto loaded almost to bursting the small valley of Meccah was shot out, discharged—I can give no better idea. In twenty-four hours this army of two hundred thousand strong, everyone his own general, everyone his own commissary, evacuated Meccah almost to a man, marched about eleven miles east, and camped on the plain of Arafat, near Mount Arafat; this march must at least have been confused, but with every man doing his worst to make a rout of it (for it is intended to be figurative of Mohammed's flight from Meccah)

confusion was no name for it. Our preparations had as usual been of the most casual and desultory character. The camels were at the door shortly after morning prayer, yet it was eleven o'clock before the tents, baggage, and provisions could be hurry-scurried together on to their backs. Some of the most important articles had been forgotten, such as water-bottles, new pilgrims' garbs, etc., which had to be purchased at the last moment. The pilgrims' garbs in which we had made our first entry into Meccah had been mere lengths of calico; we now found there was a fashionable pilgrim's garb, this being nothing more or less than a couple of rough bath towels. We mounted the camels at the door, and it took us two hours to get over the first mile through the streets, so closely were they thronged with camels; sometimes the shugdufs would get entangled and be torn nearly off; the inmates, if women, would scream and pray; if men, curse and pray, notwithstanding the guard which they are supposed to keep over their tongues on this so solemn an occasion; and predominant over all rose the oft-repeated shrill "labbayks," to which I added my quota of discordance, entering into the thing gleefully. In the narrow streets, the shugdufs would get jammed together, and no advance could

be made for some minutes; but as the crush all tended in one direction, we were at last carried out of the town into the open roads, and passed on with the current—one continuous stream of men and animals flowing out of Meccah towards Muna, a village some five miles east of Meccah, at which we arrived about three P.M. Two rooms had been engaged for us on the ground-floor of a house near the middle of the village, facing the main road, passing through it to Arafat, and here we put up for the night. The road towards Muna had been a gradual ascent. We passed over one or two stone viaducts and some cuttings between the hills; altogether it was the best attempt at a made road I saw in the country. We also met with one or two reservoirs well supplied with water.

The village of Muna lies in a pass rather than a valley, some two or three hundred yards across and half-a-mile long, between two abrupt rocky ridges, about two or three hundred feet in height. A good many low houses are built along the pass at the sides of the Arafat road, which is about eighty feet wide. All along this street rows of provision, tea, or tobacco stalls had been set up, and the place for the time had become a

fair. In one of the windows of our room I took up my post to watch the crowds passing in their uniform white dresses, for although the women do not wear the pilgrims' garb, they must dress in white. I had not been looking out long when I became aware from the greater commotion and a general pressing from the middle of the street that something was going to happen ; so I inquired from the keeper of a date-stall outside the window, and was told the "Sheréf" was coming, and in a minute or two the head of the procession appeared. As nearly as I can remember it passed my window in the following order : First came the Sheréf's vanguard, about one hundred bare-backed camels, each ridden by two armed Bedawin, a spearman in front and a matchlock-man behind, the choicest collection of Bedawi rags and filth I ever had the pleasure of contemplating. Their animals were huddled together like a flock of sheep, filling up the whole street, forcing the crowds before them and into the shops and stalls ; though the rag-muffins exerted themselves madly, and appeared to be riding furiously they made little headway, their very hurry and confusion retarding their advance. I never saw a more barbarous, savage exhibition than these excited ferocious-looking warriors, with

their long matted locks and the twenty-five foot spears surmounted with tufts of ostrich feathers which some of them carried. In rear of these mingled with and close behind came other camel-riders, playing on reed instruments like short flageolets, keeping very good time and producing much noise: the music was in keeping with time and place, and was not at all bad to listen to: an Irish keen played merrily on half-a-dozen Highland pipes would perhaps be as much like the Sheréf's band as anything. After them followed a led camel in crimson cloth and gold ornaments, said to be carrying something belonging to the Kaabah: what was visible was a piano-case - shaped structure about four feet high, covered with red cloth, and a lot of bells hanging on its front side which made a great jangling at every step of the camel. Behind this followed a rabble of armed functionaries on foot, carrying breech-loading and revolving guns and rifles, spears, swords, and anything to kill with, from a Deringer to a battle-axe. After these came twelve led horses in gold and silver trappings following one another in line—light bays and chestnuts in rather too good condition for work, but compact, muscular, pretty little animals, each

one handsomer than the last ; and if they had gone on following one another all day, you could not have taken your eyes off. Then came the Sheréf himself, riding an iron-gray horse somewhat higher than the led ones, with exceedingly slight limbs and neck, giving the idea of light weight and great speed, but pacing quietly and unconcernedly through the mob without as much as turning its lovely little head. The wonderful docility of these evidently high-mettled animals was good to look at. The Sheréf's horse was "the model" of them all ; it seemed to be diligently persevering to carry its burden easily and not to have a look or thought for any other object. The Sheréf himself was dressed in the costume of a Bedawi Shaykh ; light blue mantle* worked in gold about the shoulders and collar, fastened in front with a thick gold cord and tassels ; on his head the ordinary silk head-dress† of the Bedawi, kept on by a camel's-wool ring‡ round the top of the head. He is a slight, wiry, well-made man, below the medium height ; his complexion would be considered very dark even for a Bedawi, almost black. He has a small round bullet head, and that peculiar cast of countenance which provokes

* Aba.

† Kufiyah.

‡ Aahal.

you to say he has a face like a monkey, notwithstanding his very shrewd intelligent expression. His beard and moustache are short and scrubby, and I should guess him at under forty years of age. His years, however, are hard to judge, and he might be any age from twenty-four to forty, or older if he uses hair-restorer, as is the custom of many Meccans. I have only one little matter to add : the High Sheréf, the first Mohammedan in the world, was mounted in an English saddle, doing the Great Pilgrimage in the pig's skin, happy and unconscious ! The soul of that porker, wherever it is, must be grunting triumphant hallelujahs. It does not require a profound knowledge of the East to appreciate the awful portent to Mohammedanism in this. At distances of about twenty yards respectively followed his nephews or sons—(I was differently informed). The elder came first, a rather good-looking, bamboo-complexioned youth about fourteen, and after him the younger, evidently a brother of the first, about eight years old. Both were mounted on chestnut horses, and dressed like the Sheréf. At this part of the procession were a great number of followers, bearers of wands and insignia of office, mounted and foot armed attendants, some in pilgrims' garb and some in ordinary gala-dress. At a distance of

some fifty yards behind these rode a number of Turkish officers in uniform clearing the way for the Pacha, the Sheréf taking precedence of him, I believe, in consideration of the religious nature of the ceremony. A line of Mamelukes (all Turkish horse-soldiers are called Mamelukes in the Hejaz) in uniform, armed with sabres and "Winchester" repeating-carbines, were drawn up on each side of the road ; this line was kept advancing by the rear-man trotting outside to the front, where he would draw up until he again became rear-man. This kept a line of some fifty horses stationary on each side of the road : between them the Pacha passed in an open carriage, which was a new shiny barouche drawn by two European chestnut carriage-horses, with coachman and footmen dressed in civilised livery, and the Pacha, a gray old gentleman, in a well-cut suit of black cloth —a spick-and-span turn-out that would have shone in the Park. Imagine the contrast between them and their surroundings ! I had become to think of such things as belonging to another state of existence ; the barouche and pair quite carried me back with a revulsion. Close after the carriage followed two brass twelve-pounder field-guns drawn by mules, and a regiment of infantry, carrying their arms sloped and bayonets fixed, all the officers being

in uniform, but the privates in pilgrims' garb. This ended the procession, which encamped about a mile farther on. Then the same crowd of men and animals, with now and then detachments of Turkish troops, kept sweeping by till two A.M., when I lay down on my blanket in a corner of the room where the Amér and nine or ten more of his principal servants were sleeping.

In the morning I did not get up till the stir of rolling up rugs and carpets awoke me. I found bright sunshine, and the morning prayer long over. So taken up had my companions been with peace-making and forgiving one another all grudges, as they were to be absolved from all past sins on that day, that I had been overlooked. So I said a great many "God-forgive-mes" with all due contrition, and after my ablution and prayer, joined in the general reconciliation that was going on. We fell on one another's necks, recalled and confessed all little petty offences one to another, certain of being forgiven in tears. I at first relied on my imagination for items, but my companions soon reminded me of numbers of ways in which I had offended them unconsciously or otherwise. They seemed sincere though, and made very clean breasts of it themselves. I found where numbers of little articles

had gone that I had missed from my bundle. This one had appropriated a penknife, another a pair of socks. I, of course, gave and forgave with the best grace possible. We were now supposed to be at peace with all the world of True Believers, and might with clear consciences appear at Arafat. Though the crowds had been pressing past all night, their numbers did not seem in the least diminished.

I remember feeling very uncomfortable on that morning, the morning of the day on which I was to acquire the honoured title of Haji, and witness a scene, which it is given to few Europeans to see (probably not more than one in a generation). I felt a sort of depression, as though I required to be brought up to the sticking-point. Perhaps I had not quite got over the opium. I tried to wear this off by extra exertion in assisting at loading the camels; and while passing to and fro from the house, with bundles of gear, I twice fancied a woman in the yard tried to attract my attention, and the next time I passed I heard her pronounce my name. The "Lady Venus" at once dawned on me. I had been living in such stirring times lately that she had quite escaped my memory, and you may be sure my "Peace be upon you!"

and “God be praised!” came from the bottom of my heart, when she now appeared on the scene so opportunely. She told me that she was staying in the same house as myself, with a lady friend, who was treating her to a seat on a camel for the pilgrimage. She also said the boy Abdallah had been twice to my house in Meccah to inquire for me, but had been told that I was gone to Jeddah. We had not much opportunity to talk, but I hastily got her to give me a programme of the forthcoming events of the next three days, and we agreed to meet in the Haram on that day week. Coarse remarks soon began to be made by the men standing about, and we were obliged to part quickly.

About eight A.M. our party started. In a shug-duf you are so shut in by the cover that you can see little outside but your own animal’s head and the preceding one’s rear; so as I had been considerably freshened up by my meeting with the “Lady Venus,” I preferred to walk by the camels, and mingle with the throng, giving my mount to one of my companions. As we passed along the valleys between, the rocky hills became more open, and the crowds were able to disperse themselves over wider roads, so that the press was not so great as on the day before.

About an hour after leaving Muna, I recognised in a dead horse on the road one of the fine carriage-horses I had seen the day before drawing the Pacha. Its throat had been cut, as is the custom when an animal is thought to be past recovery; and though it could not have been dead more than three or four hours, its skin was fast becoming like leather, so quickly does the dry sand and air of the desert absorb moisture. The road from Meccah to Arafat cannot be more than ten or eleven miles, yet many animals had fallen by the way. Between Muna and Arafat I counted fourteen dead camels, and also saw many fresh graves of the last night, probably those of men who, having travelled thousands of miles, had died at the very threshold of their goal.

The camel-shaykh, who was conductor of our caravan, and from whom we had hired the camels owned by him or some of his relations, spoke a little Hindustani—a very unusual accomplishment for a Bedawi. He was an exceedingly good specimen of his kind, though not by any means a fair sample of that light-hearted murderer; far too good for that. The ordinary Bedawi is slightly made, wiry and short, and you may see a better leg on a crutch than his any day. This man was tall, muscular, and full-

bearded, but a thorough Bedawi in manner, active and seamanlike. He gave his orders to those he considered under him with all the confidence of an efficient officer, and a good deal of the "hop along" air of a Yankee boatswain. So much of the "nautical touch" was there about him and his companions, that I at once christened him "Shaykh the Bow'sen," and would have quite expected to see him give his pants a hitch if he had worn what he and all Bedawin consider such a very unnecessary and effeminate article of apparel. He walked for some distance by my side, mounting his little son, about nine years of age, on his riding camel. After bandying a few Eastern questions and compliments, he asked me for one of the cheroots I was smoking, and then went on to ask me about India, a country where he had heard the inhabitants were not quite all Mohammedans. I noticed one of the weapons in his girdle, a long straight knife which struck me as being somehow familiar, so I pointed to it, and said inquiringly, "Good?" He at once drew it, and holding it out in admiration, exclaimed, "Rodgers!" Well, come, I thought, this is worse than my not knowing the "Lady Venus"—an unmistakable large Rodgers carving-knife, clean and bright, calling to mind

more than one cut off a ham. "Rodgers!" I said. "Where's Rodgers?" He was astonished at my ignorance. Did not I know a Rodgers blade when I saw it? And he pointed out the mystic characters and explained that all knives with that mark were—and here he gave the steel point a significant spring with his finger and thumb, and went through the motions of cutting a throat with, "In the name of God!" "God is great!" and "Infidel!". I did not care to continue the subject.

A Rodgers blade in the Hejaz I afterwards found need not necessarily have been made by Rodgers, but any blade with English characters on it, or even a native-made blade of well-proved metal obtains that name, the word having been generally adopted as a synonym for good steel; and I suspect you would have some difficulty in finding a Meccan who could explain the derivation of the word or tell when it was introduced.

There are many other words of the same kind current. The term "Anglais" is applied to all wares of well-known or evidently good material, without any reference to the place they were made; the merchants themselves, either by courtesy or from ignorance (it is difficult to say which sometimes), calling all European manufactures Egyptian or

Turkish, utterly oblivious to glaring Manchester or London brands and labels; and a Bedawi will pronounce an article to be *Français* or *Anglais* at a glance, without in the least knowing the proper significance of the terms.

About eleven A.M. we reached the plain of Arafat, a large sandy open, appearing to be somewhat below the level of the approach, and occupying an area of some four or five square miles. In the north-east of the plain is "Mount Arafat," a small hill, about two hundred feet high, composed of large masses of gray granite, at the base of quite a respectable little mountain, the "Mount of Mercy."

We pitched our tents (one for the Amér and men, another for the Begum and women) about a third of a mile south of this hill. As soon as this work was completed, I took good bearings, marked the tents well, and went off alone to the top of Mount Arafat. The scene from here was. . . . I shall not be surprised if it fits across my mind on my death-bed. The depression of the plain gives an amphitheatre-like appearance, and you could almost believe yourself on the stage of some mighty theatre, miles of audience before you, and the sombre scenery of the black "Mount of Mercy" behind you. What a time and place for a sermon!

We had all come out into the wilderness to hear a sermon on this day ; and I had determined to hear it, so sat down on the hill to wait till noon, when the "Lady Venus" had told me it would begin.

As I looked down on the great throng, a gray rippling sea of black heads and white bodies, extending from the sides of the hill, thickly clothed with men to a mile and a half off on the south, and half a mile across, and remembered the distant countries from which they came, and what brought them, it was impossible to help a feeling almost of awe. It set one thinking. Could all this be of no avail, and all this faith be in vain ? If so, it was enough to make a man lose faith in everything of the kind.

At noon I left my post on the top of the hill and pressed my way about to try and find where the preacher would stand, and see what was to be seen. The practice among the pilgrims seemed to be to come up on the hill, say one or two prayers, remain a quarter of an hour or so, and return to the plain. At noon there was no general call to prayer, the pilgrims praying in parties near their tents and judging the hour for themselves. I said no noonday prayer myself, but spent the afternoon looking about on Mount Arafat.

On the top there is a small colonnade, an obelisk

about fifteen feet high, and some low stone walls separating one little irregularity of the surface of the rock from another. Inside and outside these enclosures, and, in fact, all over the hill, the crowd was so great that it was very difficult to get from one place to another, even by climbing walls and jumping from rock to rock. On the sides of the hill are a number of platforms, built up or hewn out of the rock, and a winding road, cut from the bottom to the top, much of which is composed of steps in the rock. At the bottom of the hill is a gravelled terrace forming a road between the hill and a large reservoir of water at its base, and there is another of these built "tanks" (as they are called in India) about one hundred yards south of the first. The sides of both these tanks were occupied the whole day by pilgrims performing the "lesser" ablution. I only saw one man enter the water bodily, and he slipped off the stone edge, I think, as I noticed those near him laughing. Though I stayed on or about the hill until nearly time for afternoon prayer I heard no sermon, saw no preacher, unless a very old and dirty Arab, not in pilgrim's garb, sitting with his legs across the top of a six-foot wall, haranguing the crowd in a voice that could not be heard ten yards off,

was the orator we had all come so far to hear ; but this I doubt. The probability is, seeing the crowd and noise was so great, the Mufti and his sermon escaped me, more especially as I did not risk inquiring of strangers whom I did not know and who might be anybody short of "Our Special Correspondent," even in the Hejaz nowadays.

As the afternoon wore on the press on the hill became greater, the crowd so dense as to literally bear you up, and those on the top had the greatest difficulty in forcing their way down. Many women had got on the hill and were being much crushed, some people were trodden under foot and forced into the crevasses of the rocks. I managed to battle my way out of it, and began to make for our tents. I had been pushing across the plain for a quarter of an hour or so, and was well out of the thick of the crowd, to where the ground began to be occupied more by tents and hobbled camels, when I was "brought up all standing" by a confused roaring behind me, and, on looking back, saw all the men taking off their upper pieces of cloth and waving them over their heads, shouting at the same time the names of "Allah!" "Mohammed!" and other exclamations. It seemed to begin at a preconcerted signal, whether the afternoon call

to prayers or the end of the sermon, I did not know. This shouting would last for a few minutes at its height, then die almost out, and the cloud of waving white cloths almost all subside, then rise again, beginning at Mount Arafat and spreading over the plain. These intervals of great noise and almost silence continued regularly for about half an hour, and then lapsed gradually into roar and tumult.

The whole multitude was now worked up to the highest pitch of excitement, individuals expressing the greatest emotion, while some were quite frantic, and the scene had become a perfect pandemonium. There was something eerie, almost horrible, about it to me, an unimpassioned observer. I felt like a sane man among three hundred thousand lunatics. However, I shouted, flourished my cloth, capered about, and conducted myself like my uncanny mates, till the firing of the Pacha's two guns, which was the signal for decamping, reminded me that I had better return to my party. All the tents at once began to be rased and camels moved, completely changing the whole appearance of the great camp in a few minutes. I had much difficulty in finding our people, and only reached them when they were on the point of moving off. They were not at all surprised that

I had lost them, and congratulated me on my luck in finding them as I did. All was ready for starting, but the Sheréf and Pacha, together with another procession of the same kind from Medinah, passed near our camp, so we waited to follow behind them, spending the time firing off all the firearms we had, and sending up rockets. The breechloaders were fired without taking the trouble to remove the balls from the cartridges; the Amér alone expended fifty rounds of ball cartridge, impartially distributed over the thickly-peopled plain; but as he fired high and the guns had a long range, I cannot give a return of his killed and wounded, though I have no doubt he winged a great many in remote parts. The two field-guns, as they were being drawn along, were fired, round after round, as fast as they could be loaded with small charges of loose powder without being sponged; they were laid point-blank, and at every discharge cleared a lane through the crowd, which immediately closed up, nobody seeming to be hurt. One fellow repeatedly exploded an old matchlock, with a bend in the barrel that could be distinctly perceived twenty yards off in the dusk! Immense Congreve rockets and coveys of smaller ones rose from all parts of the plain, whose sticks as they fell could

not but have hurt some one. For though the fall of a small rocket-stick is an indirect wavering flight and so harmless, still I think a twelve-foot rocket-pole, after a descent of nearly three thousand feet, might hurt a man, if it did not harpoon him clean.

Though I know every man there was living through a succession of narrow escapes, I must say I did not see a single accident. I afterwards heard of a good many who had been privileged to win (when a Mohammedan dies he is said to win or gain) on the field that day. One dead man was carried past me, who was curiously enough said to have been killed by the *kick* of a camel. That night we camped about a mile and a half before we came to Muna, at a place called Muzdalifah, and here we gathered the sixty-three small stones to be used during the next three days stoning the devil-stones at Muna: these pet stones ought to be gathered on this spot, and ought to be of a certain size (about that of a buckshot). Some were very particular as to this, and spent the greater part of the night gathering and sorting out such as they supposed to be of the proper size.

This site, like every other pilgrim site described, has innumerable minute observances connected with it,

which the pilgrim performs more or less punctiliously according to his strictness, and differently according to his knowledge or belief. We spent much of the night praying and listening to a stranger Moulvi giving us a long extempore prayer, in which he prayed literally "that all who profess and call themselves" Mohammedans, "might hold the faith in unity and peace," that "the God who conquers by many or by few," might "give us victory over all our enemies," and much more to the same effect straight from our Church Service, we responding "Amen" to every approved sentiment.

It was piercingly cold next morning, and about two hours before daylight we started for Muna, being among the first of the great mass to get there. I said my morning prayer at Muna, using warm water for the ablution, and went off immediately after to Meccah on a donkey, in company with the boy Jack, as I was anxious to reach the town, which had before been such a scene of life and bustle, in the deserted state I knew it would then be. There was nothing out of the way in this, and my haste to go before the morning meal was only put down to a little superfluous religious zeal, it being the proper thing to go into Meccah as soon as possible after the pilgrimage, and perform the same rites as on your

first arrival at the "Holy City," discarding the pilgrim's garb. The road to Meccah was not yet thronged by returning pilgrims, and the few who were on foot so early we soon passed on our donkeys, reaching Meccah shortly after sunrise. On the outskirts of the town a few coffee-shops had already been opened, and we passed two or three groups of Bedawi and Negroes; but as we came more into the town the streets were entirely deserted, not a living soul to be seen, all the shops being shut up, and the house-doors and windows closed. It had a most strange aspect, after the appearance which I had been accustomed to for months. As we approached the Haram we came upon some beggars sitting and lying at the roadside, who had been *in extremis* or too feeble to join the pilgrimage: such as were alive, for some were actually dead, greeted us most piteously, imploring us for food—and a hungry time they must have had of it. It was not so with the dogs, as they had been making horribly free with the legs of the defunct. I soon got rid of a handkerchief of bread and dates I had brought as a snack for myself, and prolonged the existence of one or two exhausted wretches. One of these held our donkeys while we went into the Haram.

I found only a party of half-a-dozen Maghribis who had returned straight from Arafat during the night, and who were the only pilgrims that had been beforehand with me. Some of the Arabs who officiate in the Haram, and who had remained behind to change the cover of the Kaabah, which is renewed at this time yearly, were giving the finishing-touches to their work. This cover is sent from Cairo, and is supposed to be made there by seven hundred virgins. After our prayers and tawaf, we did El Sai on our donkeys, which is allowable to the weak, and we easily reconciled it to our consciences, seeing we had made such haste to do it, and might be supposed to be at least very tired. After this we roamed about the dismal streets, letting our animals go as they willed. There was a kind of fascination about the lonely, lifeless lanes and passages lately so thronged, and my companion seemed to share the feeling with me, for he made the original remark, which I quote from him and not anyone else : "It is like a city of the dead." While going along a narrow out-of-the-way passage I had not before been in I came across an object that nearly brought me off my beast. Overhead, projecting straight out over the lane was a large black

board, and painted on it in yellow these letters—
LODGINGS.

“Jack,” I said, “let’s go back.” I felt as if I had seen a ghost. However, I recovered the shock sufficiently to note the locality for future investigation, and returned thoughtful and meditative along the road, now thronged with returning pilgrims, to our headquarters for the time at Muna. When I got back I was glad to get out of the pilgrim’s garb, which I had found very inadequate against the cold of the night and the sun in the day, which struck painfully on my bare shaven head. Most of our party had gone into Meccah, but returned before noon to purchase and kill the animals of which every man, who can by any means afford it, should kill at least one on this day, and which the country supplies plentifully for the occasion. This ceremony partakes more of the character of a feast than of a sacrifice, though all the sheep and goats killed are young males: I do not think even this is essential, but rather a custom resulting from the necessary practice in the country of always preserving females for breeding and milk.

I purchased a little black ram for two dollars, and killed it at home in the usual way, except that the

head was carefully turned towards the Kaabah, and saying, "In the name of God the most merciful and charitable," while cutting its throat. There ought to be something soothing to the feelings about this short prayer, which in the mouth of the Mohammedan operator sounds a fervent hissing curse, as all who have heard it know. Besides a good many rams and goats, the Amér had two young camels killed to be given to our Bedawi followers and the poor. They were killed at the east end of the village, where a level square space of about half an acre had been set aside for butchering, with a deep trench dug round it for the blood. Here the greater number of the pilgrims brought their animals to be killed, as most of the flocks were stationed at that end of the village. The mode of killing the camels was this: The animal was made to kneel down close up to the trench, and its legs were then tied in a position which made it absolutely incapable of moving them. One man then held out the head, and another drew a short knife, like a sailor's sheath-knife, round the neck, close up to the shoulders, then a rotation of the head and the neck falls, severed clean from the body. The cutting up is done without moving the carcase, the skin being opened down the centre of

the back. This work went on actively all through the day.

We also on this day got rid of the first twenty-one of our stones, seven of them being thrown at each of three places in the village. The first place is at the eastern extremity, and is a small obelisk about nine feet high, with a low circular wall round the base, inside which the stones fall after striking the obelisk. The second is in the middle of the village, like the first, but rather larger. The last is at the west end of the village. This is a high stone wall on the right-hand side of the road looking west, and a particular stone in this is the object to be hit.

It was very difficult to get near them on account of the crowd. Many pilgrims less robust than others had to throw their stones from a distance over the heads of those in front, making very wide shots. This rite is to commemorate Abraham's stoning the devil at the advice of the Angel Gabriel, when tempted by Satan at these three places. We repeated this throwing of stones on each of the two next days. I estimated that about three tons of shingle ballast had been deposited in the receptacles round the bases of the obelisks before I left Muna. These must be cleared out every year, or they would

be filled in a couple of pilgrimages. The popular belief is that they are conveyed back to Muzdalifah by angels.

Little occurred specially worthy of remark during the rest of our stay in Muna, except that we revelled in butcher's meat, of which hundreds of carcases were wasted, while gorged vultures could scarcely flounder out of your way, and flies became a great nuisance. Water was very dear, having to be brought some distance to the village.

CHAPTER VII.

IN MECCAH AFTER THE PILGRIMAGE.

ON the fourth day after the pilgrimage we returned to our old quarters in the walls of the Haram, and next day early I set out to look for—LODGINGS. As I wended my way among turbaned and scymitared Syrians, Parthians, Moguls, and Arabians, I began to think it must have been a dream, and when I came to the place and saw the veritable notice, I was almost as much surprised as on my first meeting it. There was a little tobacco-shop opposite the house, to which I went and began making small purchases, getting up a dispute about the change of a rupee, at the same time taking stock of the premises opposite, for I fought rather shy of the place. I had just come to an amicable conclusion about my change, purposely making a mistake on the right side for the shopkeeper to put him in

a good humour, and was asking him who lived in the house over the way, when a tall heavily-built man, whom I at first took for a fair-skinned Arab, slouched out of the door and came straight over to the shop, whistling merrily. That was enough.

“Good morning,” said I.

“Well, I be d——. Do you speak English?”

“Yes.”

“Good morning.”

We stood for some moments looking at one another, and I thought I had taken the fellow's measure to be the right sort, and was just on the point of opening out and declaring myself when he said :

“You are not an Englishman, are you?” with a gravity that gave me my cue.

I replied in the vilest Che-che* I could muster, “Oh yes, I am Englishman. I am speaking the English very well.”

This and a happy unconscious air banished any suspicions of such a possibility he might have had for the moment. Though he said: “Englishmen turn Mohammedan and come here and see what

* Half-caste Indian.

we do, and go back and write books. There are three here now with iron collars round their necks chained among the hills."

I did not tell him I thought that was a lie. He walked about with me the greater part of the morning, I talking broken English to him. He was a Cape of Good Hope Malay, one of an English-speaking Mohammedan community, who yearly send their half-dozen pilgrims to Meccah. He had been living some years in Meccah, and said his people had been very ill-treated when they began to come the pilgrimage. The authorities had only allowed them to live in Meccah on condition that they spoke no other language than Arabic, of which few of them knew the meaning of more than a dozen words. If an Arab had heard them speaking any other language, he was at liberty to beat them, and they dared not retaliate. This was in the days of a strict old Pacha of the good old school, who had administered the law of the Koran to the letter.

In evidence of this he pointed out to me what a number of beggars were to be seen minus a hand or a foot, the result of the said old Pacha's summary justice. This lopping-off of limbs is a great idea, by degrees practically incapacitating the old offender.

However, such severity is seldom resorted to under the present milder *régime*. The Cape Malays have now outlived all prejudice, and my new friend told me that he was very comfortable in Meccah and making money. He had in his youth been to an English school, could read and write English well, and he confessed he missed his beer and potatoes. He then began to inquire into my antecedents and what I was doing. I told him I was the servant of a rich Hindi, giving him a wrong name, for the fellow knew a great deal too much to be pleasant company, and the worst Mohammedans at heart often for appearance' sake act as the most bigoted and truculent where there is no danger to themselves.

So to get rid of my friend I put in practice a dodge I had never found to fail—begging. I began by guessing the value of his watch-chain very high, admiring his rings, and flattering him up into a little Croesus. I then, in contrast, represented my own poverty and dependent position. After this it did not require great 'cuteness in an Eastern to see what was coming. He recollects he had business to attend to, and went off suddenly, with a hasty “Upon you be peace.”

I saw him several times after, but he never granted me an interview long enough to allow of

my following up our last conversation. On one occasion he told me he had lately imported a sewing-machine, which some Moulahs had viewed and declared to be the invention of an English devil, and he wanted to know whether I could put him up to a likely purchaser.

On this day the Kaabah was opened for those who had not been in Meccah during the Ramazan, and the Haram was crowded. Every part of Meccah was always crowded. I might have given you to understand this at the beginning of my story, and that when I ever did come upon a part of Meccah that was not crowded, I should mention that remarkable circumstance ; however, as it is, the reader must understand that when I say crowded, I mean crowded.

Every part of the Haram was crowded with men, but no women, as the Kaabah was to be opened for them on the following day. It took me two hours to force my way up to the steps to await my turn, for the pilgrims were let in by parties, the steps being wheeled up to the door and drawn away by the eunuchs of the Haram, who laid about them with their sticks as we pressed for admission. At last I got in. There is no opening into the chamber but the door into which

I was carried in the rush. The heat was intense, the atmosphere unendurable. I instantly plunged my way out as a man struggles to the surface after a dangerous dive. Inside I had just time to give a good look round and glance up. Nobody is supposed to look up while in this chamber. You are told that the only man who ever did so was struck blind. All that could be seen—for the place was very dark—were the red hangings of the walls and ceiling embroidered in gold, and the three pillars supporting the flat roof, between which a number of dim lamps hung suspended from metal cross-bars.

On the day on which the women were admitted I heard the Arab cheer to great perfection. This is given by the women, or sometimes by boys. It was often repeated by hundreds of voices all through this day. They give a prolonged cry in a rather high note, with the right thumb inserted in the left cheek, which they shake rapidly; or a vibration is given to the cry by means of the tongue. Some of the women seemed almost to warble in their throats, giving to the cry a tinkling sound which was really musical.

Then came my meeting with the “Lady Venus.” This time we had arranged that she should, after the noonday prayer, walk backwards and forwards

in the arcade under my window, where I was to sit and look out till we recognised one another. This was easily managed, and I went off under her guidance. The crowd was so great that we were able to keep close together without appearing to be in company till near the shop of a Hindi binder of Korans, where she told me to wait while she went in. After waiting a few minutes a little child came up to me and invited me into the shop, leading me through to a small room at the back, where I found her sitting alone: the child then left us to ourselves. We talked for a short time about our lucky meeting at Muna, about her health, which had been very bad during the last year, almost as bad as on her first coming to Meccah many years ago (I think she said twenty). She threw her veil back and exposed her face for some time—a scandalous impropriety, which if witnessed by any-one, the least I could have done would have been to declare her my wife on the spot. I had time to observe her features closely. She was rather short, and appeared about forty. She must have been good-looking in her youth, nor was she by any means ill-favoured now. She looked healthy, all things considered. Though her complexion was somewhat sallow, her skin was fair. She had an

animated and pleasing expression. I can at this moment see her in my mind as distinctly as if she were before me in the flesh—the same sad, indulgent smile with which she greeted my little attempts at Anglo-Arabic jokes, saying : “ Speak English, child.”

I really felt the deepest pity for her, an English-woman existing in the way she had been doing for years ; and I must confess to a very soft moment when I saw the poor creature smiling, with her eyes brimful of tears before giving way and having a good cry, which relieved her. I had found in our very first *tête-à-tête* that any reference to her past had a painful effect, and hesitated to broach the subject, and so began to tell her about myself, my *christian* name, why I had come to Meccah, and the like, in the hope of getting her to give some such account of herself, when a noise outside made her draw her veil, and a boy entered with some tea and sweetmeats sent by her friend the master of the house. This took our attention for the moment, and we both had tea, and I asked the boy to get me a smoke: first, because I wanted a smoke ; secondly, because when I had done, returning the hookah would be a good excuse for going out of the room and having a look round. This little

interruption over, I asked her if she knew the Cape people. She said she had made friends with some of their women a year or two before, and had sent letters by them to the Cape to a relation whom she had seen there on her way out to India, and whose address she remembered, but had heard nothing of it since.

Having brought her to talk about herself, I now kept her at it, and pumped her as dry as I could, but it was very hard work. As well as my memory serves me, she told me that her name was "Macintosh," her father a doctor, and that she had lived in Devonshire in her youth, that she was at Lucknow at the time of the siege, and had been taken from there by a leading rebel. She avoided going into particulars, so that I did not ascertain whether she went willingly or as a captive. She said she had lived a year or so in India with this man, and that he had been hunted out of the country by the English, who set a price on his head, and had found refuge in Meccah, taking her with him; that he had died eight years before, leaving her in poverty, and that she now made a living by embroidering skull-caps, which she sold to the dealers in the bazaars.

A rich Hindi merchant, who occasionally received

letters written in English from his son, who was managing his business for him in India, and knew that he could get them translated by her, gave her a little room in his zenana-house to herself. All this I got from her only in replies to my persistent questioning, till at last I was obliged to desist out of pure compassion, she seemed so cowed and bullied, and was getting quite incoherent. After this I got her to repeat a few chapters of the Koran, pretending I wanted to learn the Meccah accent, so interesting her. I found, besides Hindustani, she could speak and read Persian and Arabic, though not Turkish. She regretted she was not in a position to be acquainted with any Turks, for whom she seemed to have some respect. She mentioned the names of a number of men living in Meccah who she said had been rebels or mutineers, also telling me the prices set on their heads by the English Government, and appeared perfectly up in everything connected with the siege and relief of Lucknow. She also let drop that a young Frenchman had lived eighteen months in Meccah, and had died about six months before my arrival. I asked her what he died of. To which she replied in Hindustani, with the usual “God knows; God giveth and God taketh away. Blessed be the

name of the Lord." And then told me the following story :

"That about two years before a young Frenchman had come to Meccah with whom she became very intimate, and had often seen him just as she was now seeing me. He had told her that he was a Mohammedan from conviction, and that he had at first gone to Constantinople to live, but that his father, who was very wealthy, had made such efforts to get him back that he was obliged to remove to Cairo. Here he was again found out by his friends, who did everything that money and influence could do to make him return to Christianity. He seems to have been a mere lad, for some attempt was made to get him off from here by force to France; however he escaped and fled to another place in Egypt, where he was again hunted out by his friends, who drove him to Meccah as a last refuge from them. It must have been 'preserve me from my friends' with him, poor fellow! In Meccah he took service in the house of a wealthy Turk, and was thought a very clever youth, 'learned in all the learning of the Egyptians,' so much so that he was looked upon with great jealousy by the Moulahs (most likely on account of the peculiar views he would be likely to

have held), and, as the ‘Lady Venus’ said, ‘made many enemies.’ He repudiated the Frenchman, always calling himself a Turk.”

I asked if he was known to be a Frenchman, and she replied :

“He was a True Believer,” implying that beyond that nobody knew or cared what he might be.

She laid great stress on his extensive reading and the fluency with which he spoke Turkish and Arabic, and on the fact of his being well known and much disliked by a certain set who made it so hot for him that he was on the point of going away, and had seen and said good-bye to her when he suddenly died, and she had no doubt but that there had been foul play, darkly hinting at a cup of coffee.

This was the sum of all I heard from the “Lady Venus” on this our longest interview. On parting she pointed out to me a peculiarity in the make of the upper part of her veil by which I might distinguish her from any other woman, and we appointed a rendezvous in the Haram, where we could meet on any day at a certain hour, in order that we might see as much of one another as possible, and that I might consult her about my prospects of getting away ; for I was becoming very sick of hearing every day of ships leaving Jeddah, only a matter of some forty

odd miles off, yet seeming to be almost in another world—ships I knew well, and whose officers were old shipmates. Often when I with difficulty recognised under the disguise of Arab mispronunciation the mutilated name of some well-known old craft, and pictured to myself scenes “so near and yet so far,” in which iced beer and table-napkins figured prominently, I would have given five years of my life for a few dollars to carry me over the little strip of desert to Christianity and cleanliness. The “Lady Venus” could not help me, and there was nothing for it but to wait with my eyes open. Sometimes I would think of “humping my swag,”* taking the road for it in the true “turnpike-sailor” style; but the Hejaz is not the Colonies, and a “sundowner”† here runs the risk of being potted at from behind every rock, as a Bedawi would not think of letting a solitary wayfarer pass without at least the little attention of a casual snapshot; not that he would hit or expect to hit, but then nothing is impossible, and though the boast of the Hejaz Bedawi is that he never robs a

* (Colonial) Shouldering my kit.

† Colonial name for a tramp; so called, from their way of going from farm to farm, timing it so as to arrive at sundown, in order to ensure a supper and bed.

living True Believer, he has a knack of asking said True Believer to give him something, at the same time playing the curved point of a short sharp sword about the pit of his stomach in a way that generally influences even a True Believer to be charitable; or should he prove ungenerous, our Bedawi has not the slightest hesitation about stripping him *dead*, and, to insure his not feeling deprived, generally makes his children with careful kindness relieve him of his head and hands. Also my position with the Amér, though solid enough at present, might have been very delicate had I shown any wish to desert him or failed in an attempt to do so. No! I decided that as I had a whole skin as yet, it would be a pity to risk it when I might do better by waiting.

I think it was on the eighth day after the pilgrimage that the inundation occurred. Such a flood had not visited Meccah for seventeen years, on which occasion the water had risen seven feet in the Haram. This time the day opened very black indeed to the eastward, the clouds having a sandy, smoky appearance I had noticed before on one or two occasions when it had been followed by a heavy downpour of rain. These black days

were very marked as a great and sudden change from the usual blue clearness of the sky. It did not begin to rain in Meccah till about eleven A.M., though it must have been raining for some time towards Muna and Arafat, for the stream from there into the valley of Meccah had overflowed, and already the streets at the east end and in the centre of the city were flooded with several inches of water. Still no serious inundation was anticipated, the flooding of the streets being the usual result of an ordinary shower, and the stalls in the bazaars stood at the sides of streets, down the centre of which people were wading in little torrents.

As soon as it began to rain I returned to the house, and saw through the window that it shortly after set in to blow hard from the east, accompanied by heavy tropical rain—not exceptionally heavy for the tropics, but much harder than would be likely to be seen out of them. As the rain continued, all our people and a number of friends not belonging to our party, dripping wet, came in for shelter and filled our two rooms. In the Haram a few inches of water quickly gathered, and the attendants were employed, as I had often

seen them before, in keeping the pavement round the Kaabah clear by sweeping the water down large holes in the pavement.

Another hour, and the rain still continued to come down as hard as ever, the wind blowing half a hurricane, flapping and bellying out the cover of the Kaabah as though it would blow it away, which it certainly would have done had it not been new. At this time the Amér sent some of his under servants out to try and get a little of the water that flowed off the Kaabah for us to drink, and, as they went in and out, they told us that the water was rising rapidly in the streets, and shortly afterwards came in and said it would soon be flowing into the Haram.

Some of us went out to see ; I among the rest. The water had risen so suddenly and unexpectedly that there had been no time for the most ordinary precautions. Those who had seen it said it had come in like a wave from the direction of Muna ; if so, and it had passed over the scene of the late slaughter, it must now be simply a poisoned flood. It was now flowing in turbid muddy streams, three or four feet deep, down all the streets.

Across every entrance to the Haram there is a raised stone parapet, apparently built for the

purpose of keeping the water out during these floods. I took my stand on one of these and watched the strong steady stream flowing past laden with the floating wreck of the bazaars, cages of fowls, all kinds of fruit, flocks of bread loaves, empty baskets, the legs and tops of wooden stalls, dogs swimming about, and being forced whining back wherever they attempted to land, Negroes and Arabs standing in the stream seizing whatever was best worth picking up as it floated past.

Most of the shops were already flooded, and the water had risen so quickly that there had not been time to remove much of the stock, which was being floated out into the stream, the owners piling it back manfully. Such of the shops as were not already flooded were crowded by as many as could find standing room, as were all steps and isolated dry points.

The depth and strength of the stream continued to increase visibly, and it became a business of swimming for those who plunged in after salvage. The flood had not yet reached the Haram, where thousands had taken refuge and shelter under the arcades, but in a few minutes the water trickled under our feet down into the Haram behind us.

The larger gates of the Haram were now shut, but these had little doors in them which were left open till the rush of water became so strong that it was found impossible to close some of them. This was about noon. I then went into the house out of the storm, put on dry clothes, and spent the rest of the day looking out of the window.

The rain showed no signs of easing, and the wind continued to blow with great violence, and in the same direction. The water was rushing into the Haram at every gate, the badly-made and loosely-jointed doors scarcely offering any obstruction and merely filtering it of the coarser *débris*. At this time a sailor might have described the Haram as taking in green seas fore and aft, except that the water was bright pea-soup colour.

About two P.M. the wind suddenly shifted to the west, taking the cover of the Kaabah "flat aback," only giving it time for a couple of tremendous flaps and bangs before it settled into fluttering and bellying in the opposite direction. It continued to rain and the water to flow in until about three P.M., when the wind fell away with a few parting gusts, and the rain took off with one or two parting gushes of large drops.

After this, the water ceased to rise in the Haram, and stopped flowing in from the outside very quickly. During the whole storm pilgrims had been performing the tawaf and kissing the Black Stone in greater numbers than usual at this time of the day, and now, when the water was at its highest and the Black Stone immersed, many continued to swim round the Kaabah, and put their heads under to kiss the stone. The temperature throughout the storm was uniformly cool, though not more than normally so, and it only remained overcast until sunset, the storm passing away to the north.*

The whole of the large square was now turned into a lake, the water lying about three feet deep in the western arcades, six feet round the Kaabah, and a few inches in the eastern arcades, showing that though the square looked a plain when dry, it was considerably inclined in these directions.

* Notwithstanding that storms of this nature are rare in the neighbouring sea, erratic whirlwinds of any dimensions are daily occurrences in the Hejaz. The one above described, however, will have been seen to have been a true rotatory storm of moderate cyclonic violence; and acting on the known laws it travelled up from the south-east in an indirect course, at varying slow rates, averaging about four or five miles an hour, which would give it a diameter of some twenty miles.

There was great rejoicing among us when the water ceased to rise, for it was beginning to be feared that it would put out the lamps as it had done in the last great flood; and this is looked upon as unfortunate or ominous in some way. The water subsided almost as quickly as it had risen; by the time of sunset prayer it had retreated from the arcades on the three higher sides of the square, and at the evening prayer (nine P.M.) there remained only a couple of feet of water near the Kaabah, and the arcades were left dry all round.

The next morning opened with an azure firmament, and when we got up for early prayer there was hardly a pint-pool of water to be found at the surface anywhere in Meccah; but in every place where the water had been it had left a layer of about six inches of tough springy earth, cutting like clay—in many places it was much thicker: round the Kaabah this deposit was eighteen inches deep. In the morning before the traffic began the lumpy uneven roads looked smooth and clear as though freshly laid with asphalt, and the whole square of the Haram like a sandy beach at low water. It was pleasant to the bare feet—soft and smooth. I did the

tawaf several times that morning at a good run—sharper exercise than I had taken for many a day. I had a walk after daybreak in the streets, which were soon trodden slushy, for though the layer of earth left by the flood was pretty firm at first, there was a good deal of water in it, and the feet of the passengers soon kneaded it into a tenacious black mud, from which the beggars and passers-by unearthed all kinds of little articles of property. Here and there the leg of a drowned dog protruded, perhaps side by side with a prettily-worked broken cane basket, or a squashed melon. It was curious to reflect what a number of strange odds and ends must have been buried side by side under that layer of mud, the productions of almost any age or state of art, from a piece of worked gun-flint or Bedawi pottery to a four-bladed penknife, perhaps in some future age to be brought to light together in bewildering variety. Three old tottering ruins in the east end of the town had received the last shake to their foundations and fallen, killing, I was surprised to hear, only four persons. I heard of no other human lives being lost directly from the inundation. Much destruction must have been done to all damageable property on the ground-floors

throughout the lower arch of the valley, still I heard very little complaint about losses except from the beggars and people who had nothing to lose ; these of course made a great pretext of the flood.

Next day the bazaars looked the old style, and business flourished as if nothing had happened. With their “all’s-for-the-best” indifference to fate, these people barely made the events of the previous day the subject of a morning call’s gossip. The mud defiling the Haram was another matter though, and great numbers of volunteers were soon at work removing it, many of the wealthiest pilgrims carrying baskets or fishing-mattocks, together with working-parties of soldiers from the barracks. In spite of the great supply of labour it took three days to clear it all out, and place it in the streets in the immediate vicinity in large heaps blocking up the way, till the mounds were trodden out and hardened down, still leaving some of the roads so hummocky and uneven that camels could not travel before the soldiers had done a little towards levelling off the tops of the steepest hillocks ; for notwithstanding the soft, I was going to say catlike, feet of the camel, it can neither go up nor down a very steep hill.

For many days after the flood the water in all the

wells was brown and muddy, and if left standing all night would not be more than half settled in the morning. The taste of all the wells was altered, the ordinary water tasting like Zem Zem, and the Zem Zem itself much weakened. For a couple of days there was some moisture in the air, and bread left on a shelf uncovered for a few hours did *not* appear to have undergone a second baking, and have a metallic ring from hardness. The worst result of the flood was the great amount of sickness that prevailed after it ; cholera, small-pox, and typhus epidemics broke out and raged wildly together for about three weeks.

Mohammedan burial rites differ a good deal in different countries, and of course vary with circumstances—from the dancing howling wakes of Egypt and Syria, to the mere laying of the body straight and placing a few stones over it in the desert. In Meccah it is usual to take the bier to a part of the Haram near Abraham's Stone, so that the soul may pass out of it through the door of the Kaabah, and the noonday prayer is recited by the Imam before interment of the body under a few bushes and a couple of feet of earth, with its face towards the Kaabah. A coffin is never used by Mohammedans, though voluminous swathings and wrappings

are, the grave-clothes being sometimes made of fine material, white being the common mourning colour.

Within three days after the flood I noticed the number of funerals increasing; and at one time, about ten days after, the quantity passing through the Haram was so great as to form almost a continuous procession for an hour before noon. One day I counted sixty-three funerals.

No idea can be formed from this of the number of deaths which really occurred daily, as probably by far the greater majority of those who died had no friends, or were not thought worth the trouble of carrying to the Kaabah on the way to the burial-ground. Men in the agonies of cholera might frequently be seen lying at the sides of the streets, and never a good Samaritan went near them. Small-pox and typhus cases, in all stages of the diseases, walked about in public, almost arm-in-arm, no one avoiding or seeming to think it the least out of the way. In one house I visited there were eight small-pox cases down at the same time, of which five died, and yet five other healthy men continued to eat and sleep in the same room!

If there is any foundation at all for our English notion about contagion, how Meccah escaped deci-

mation does seem a miracle. Somehow I did not apprehend anything myself; I don't know why exactly, but I had not the slightest fear, though I certainly expected some of our party to be laid up, so many of us being crowded into the two rooms, which had become revoltingly filthy. Still, though we moved about amidst infected localities and among infected people in the most reckless manner, none of us were taken seriously ill. This was attributed to the Amér's energetic precautions, he having, regardless of expense, provided his whole household with a new and infallible charm. I wore mine round my neck till it got entangled with my beads, so I broke the string and threw it away, first opening it out to see what it was made of. It was a ball of bees'-wax, about the size of a No. 12 bullet, with a little pellet of paper inside on which something had been written; but it was now so crumpled and torn I could make nothing of it. The run on the graveyards soon began to take the pilgrims off, and the town was getting less crowded, the pilgrims leaving by thousands; and we now began to make our preparations for starting with the first caravan to Medinah.

I met the "Lady Venus" three or four times in

the Haram, and had conversations with her for intervals varying from the mere exchange of a few words during a moment's opportunity to a ten minutes' talk walking together under the arcades. Once she asked me if I had a book or any English printing to give her, saying she had part of an old almanac, ever so many years old, which she had come across in Meccah, and hoarded up ever since to read. One day she showed me her much-thumbed treasure—only five pages, one month on each page. I did not notice the year, but saw the sort of thing it was—"Coronation Day," "Battle of Waterloo," etc. etc., and then returned it to her carefully, telling her that it was not bad reading under the circumstances, though it did occur to me how she would value a more substantial and interesting volume, poor beggar! I wrote in English my christian-name and address in England on a little bit of blue paper and gave it to her, and heard her read it straight off. I told her if she wrote a letter and could get any returning pilgrim to give it to an English officer in one of the ships, it would be sure to be forwarded. She had little hopes of being able to find anyone she could trust,

or who would be likely to do such a thing even if they promised. The last time but one that I met her she was very queer, slightly hysterical I thought. She kept repeating : "Ah, child ! you don't know what it is to me to see you," and then, "I would not hurt you," "I would not do you any harm," stopping me and catching hold of my arm as we walked along so excitedly that I expected a scene every moment: certainly in London the expression of half such emotion would have found us the centre of an admiring throng. I looked as unconcerned as I could, talking in Arabic to her and trying to calm her ; till at last I lost my temper, and said : "Do you want to raise a row ?" and then told her that I should meet her on the day of my leaving for Medinah, if she would keep cool and find a place where we could be alone. I then hurried home, for I had distinctly heard a sly-looking Arab make use of the nasty word—Christian.

In view of our desert journey to Medinah, the Amér began to curtail his retinue: he disbanded quite a little army of spongers and loafers, who had attached themselves to us on one pretence or another. These hangers-on were very useful, always ready to oblige or do any

little thing, getting in return only what they could beg or steal, which is not much really. However, they have an innocent weakness for new boots, which they have a somewhat inconvenient habit of mistaking for their own, often accidentally slipping their feet into the best pair on the threshold (where all the boots are left) when they go out of the house. My boots seemed to be especially coveted by them. I lost a couple of pairs a very short time after I came to Meccah. If that sort of thing had gone on it would have been disastrous, so I was obliged in self-defence, whenever my boots were changed, to put on the old pair left, make a call where I knew there would be a crowded "At home," leave early, and mistake some other gentleman's boots for the ones I came in. In this way I seldom went about in the same pair for more than a fortnight. They were loose red leather slippers, turned up at the toes and worn down at the heel, and there was no difficulty about the matter of fitting if they were only big enough. I gave up the sandals I had at first taken to, as my feet got so dirty, and would soon have been so deformed that I should have found it difficult to return to European boots.

I had some hopes about this time that the Amér would give me "the sack" and a few dollars, as he was doing with others, and indeed I did not think it at all unlikely, as he seemed to have forgotten my existence since our return from Arafat, and I had kept a good deal out of the way, merely coming in to eat and sleep, neither making myself useful nor amusing. Some of my companions, too, had got hold of a story that I had been trying to join the Sultan's army. The fact was that a fanatic Moulah had raised a band of about four hundred men to go to Turkey and fight the Russians, by preaching a jihad and proclaiming that miracles would be performed for us if we fought with swords only, and gave up our lives with proper cheerfulness ; and I had secretly enrolled myself under the good Moulah in the hope of getting away with him. But as the Turkish authorities discountenanced all this sort of thing, and as the Moulah met with only half-hearted encouragement from the pilgrims, the scheme fell through for want of funds to carry us to the far-off scene of action. I was told that on the outbreak of war between Turkey and Russia, the Pacha of Meccah had made a call for volunteers, which had been responded to by thirty

thousand untrained men. They were all immediately put into training, when orders were received from Constantinople to tell them that the Sultan was grateful for their offer, and would not ask them to endanger their lives, but that any little trifle from their purses would be most acceptable : I suspect this call was not so readily responded to. I believe some rumour of Turkish reverses must have got abroad to cause this second war fever, which appeared just after the pilgrimage, though the only talk I ever heard about it was the everlasting "By the help of God the Sultan wins," and no further interest seemed to be taken in the matter.

Well, I let this story of my wanting to enlist pass without contradiction, as a sort of feeler to see how the Amér would like it (I never knew whether he heard it or not, but think he must). I then invalidated. I had noticed all my companions took turns at a rest, pretending to be suffering from what they called "cold fever," another term for an opium booze. It would not have done for me to take opium, the symptoms were too well known to my companions, and so to make myself thoroughly useless, I had to get a "cold fever" which they

could not cure. I lay on my blanket, got off my feed, and did *not* sleep all day and say *good* when every one else said *bad*. The giving up of my regular meals made no great difference to me, as I had lately become so tired of the dietary that I could eat nothing with pleasure, and felt a craving for a slice of white bread or salt beef almost as badly as the gnawings of real starvation.

In the meantime our preparations for the road were going on in earnest, making immense tins of sweetmeats (at which I would not assist), cleaning and burnishing up of arms. How those niggers and their arms did tease me, to be sure ! Four months before their humanlike movements might have amused me ; and now, when the Amér struggled the bayonet on to the end of the rifle, and displayed his skill in the use of it by making swinging slashes at an imaginary adversary in the top of a cocoa-nut tree or in a balloon, if I had not been able to resist a very powerful impulse, I should have jumped up, whipped the rifle out of his paws, clubbed him with the butt till he made a new joke, and forced all the rest to sing "God save the Queen" at the point of the bayonet. I suppose it was because I knew that if I had offered to explain

that five rounds in fifteen minutes was not considerate sharp practice with the Martini-Henri, I should have been told I knew nothing about it, and the Amér would have condescended to explain the action of the breech in this “invention of the Sultan of Turkey’s for the benefit of the Russians!” as he called it.

I had been living so long with these people as one of them, that I had actually come down to being annoyed by the airs of a nigger. It’s time I was out of this, I thought, and no mistake.

Their own weapons are murderously dangerous to look at, and ingeniously harmless to use. Take the swords for instance.* The blades are so much curved, and so badly balanced, that in real work it would require half your attention to prevent them turning in the hand. The hilts are like old-fashioned brass door-knobs, or paper-cutter handles, about large enough to admit of being grasped with three fingers on a pinch, and the idea of giving points has yet to occur to the mind of an Eastern swordsman. For all the rest of our impossible

* Only Indian swords, as some of the Persian swords, might be trusted for work.

armoury, a similar collection may be seen in any museum of antiquities.

The only one worth description here is the Arab knife or jambiyah, with one of which most of our people had provided themselves. Jambiyahs are slightly different in make in different parts of Arabia, and are known by the names of the places that most affect the particular shape. The Meccah jambiyah is the broadest and most bent; the Mascat jambiyah is nearly straight, and about half as broad as the Meccan. The iron of the jambiyah is exceedingly soft, and sharpened by beating out the edge cold on a small anvil, shaped for this purpose only, the sharpening of jambiyah being a trade of itself. This gives the best edge I know for severing skin and hair, though of course when applied to anything hard it instantly disappears. With a newly-sharpened jambiyah a rolled-up sheepskin may be divided at one stroke.

At this time if a gunlock was out of order, I would not mend it; for though systematically snubbed for my general ignorance, I had established a bit of a reputation as a mechanic. I was too sick to pray, or if I did, I would only perform the "jumo," that is, going through the motions of the

ablution without water, which is allowable to the very sick, or when there is no water to be had. I lay on my blanket night and day, scarcely speaking to anyone, but taking in everything going on around me most keenly. Tales of robbery and bloodshed committed by the Bedawin were being brought in every day by kind friends who were not going with us, and long stories of past adventures in the desert would be recounted by comforters who dropped in to cheer us up, generally putting the Amér into half-an-hour's passionate weeping and praying, to pass off in a second when "Shaykh the Bow'sen" (the same who had conducted us to Arafat) appeared on the scene, to bargain and arrange about the number of camels we should require; then the Amér and all his uncles and relations composing his suite would smile, cajole and "brother" the Shaykh, to whose tender mercies they were going to entrust themselves for a month in the desert, only to curse and abuse him and all "Shaitan" Bedawin after he was gone.

Some of our people, the "first warrior" among them, "funked" the Medinah journey altogether, and set to work to persuade the Amér that the best thing he could do would be to send them home

to Hind with the bulk of his purchases and all the baggage he was unable to carry across the desert with him, and, above all, that his letters home might be carried by safe hands. This settled it, and he decided to let them go. I could quite understand his anxiety to communicate with his friends, for he and all his party most fully realised the dangers of their next undertaking, even I—who certainly did not, being very sceptical as to the amount of peril, putting down the Hindi exaggerated accounts for what I thought they were worth—would have liked to have left some traces behind me before starting three hundred miles into Arabia.

As soon as these last arrangements of the Amér were settled I put on foot another scheme, which promised to answer perfectly. I told the "first warrior" that if the Amér proposed retaining my services, I should like to go at once to Hind to the Amér's home and wait there without wages till his return; but that when he did come back I should insist on pay beginning. I explained that though the hope of my life was to perform the meritorious pilgrimage to the tomb of the Prophet of God, I was now so sick that I should only be an encumbrance to the Amér if I went with him.

As I expected, this came at once to the Amér's ears, and he called me to him the same evening and asked me whether I would prefer to go to Medinah or return to Hind. It would not have done to have appeared too anxious; so, after stating whys and wherefores, I asked him to allow me not to decide till the day before starting, when finally the number of camels required was to be fixed, and when I hoped, please God, to be well enough to go with him to "Medinah the Honour'd;" if not, then God is great, and I am ill-fated. "Good! Go," said the Amér, and I already almost fancied myself eating ham and eggs in the Bombay Sailors' Home.

When the day for giving my answer came, I told the Amér that I was worse, "my blood was dry," "my brains were wet," "my stomach twisted," and "I was not as strong as a chicken;" but by the help of God, once at his honour's house, the "Diamond Gate," its world-famed air and water would soon restore me; "Meccah the fortunate" was undoubtedly heaven-sent, "its waters!"—here raptures; "its climate!"—here outbursts of admiration. Still I declared I was afraid I was too bad a sinner to derive full benefit from these great gifts,

and my own poor climate of Hind would suit me better. He soon cut my blarney short with, "Good, you shall go to the 'Diamond Gate;'" and I had to sustain my part by expressing proper grief and having to be forced back to my blanket greatly excited.

Next day by noon the Amér and all his party had gone to a place outside Meccah, "Waddy Fatima," where the Medinah caravan was to assemble before starting. There had been most gushing partings between us—we that were going back to Hind had innumerable messages to kith and kin given us to take. I felt I was parting with them never to see any of them again most likely, and they believed in me, so that I must say I felt a certain amount of regret. I was sorry to lose the "third warrior," with whom I had really struck up a friendship. We were to start the same evening for Jeddah. I soon tied up my bundle, which was not a very big one, and now as I might consider myself booked, I thought there would be no harm in going out to make a few little purchases of relics and other reminders of Meccah, as my companions had done; this is what I told the "first warrior," but I of course went at once to the Haram to meet the "Lady Venus,"

as I had appointed with her. I had not been sitting long when she came up to me, and we went off together as we had done on other occasions. This time we walked about two miles into the country on the Muna road, to the house of an Arab ; here she went in, and shortly after came out and told me that the man had disappointed her and was not at home, and as there were only women inside I could not be admitted. This was a disappointment, and poor "Lady Venus" was extremely sorry ; however, we walked about together among the hills, always walking fast, as if we were going somewhere, and had a talk. I told her how I had worked it, and the luck I had met in getting away on that day, and I asked her point-blank, "If I come back for you will you go to England with me ?" to which she replied "Yes," much in the same tone as the little boy answered the lady who asked him, "Could you eat a bun ?" I said to her, "You, understanding so many languages, could easily make a living in England," and I mentioned the "Asiatic Home," not that I knew anything about it, but it occurred to me at the moment as a place where she would be likely to find work. I also told her that there were many rich people in England who would, if

they knew of her existence, soon provide money or means of getting her released. To this she replied :

“ How you talk ! ” (events have shown how I did talk, to be sure ! Yes, I am afraid I was a great deal too hopeful), and so on ; I promising her she would be in England in less than a year, and she very much doubting the chances of such a thing till we got back to the Haram, when she again became as excited as on our last meeting, and behaved so foolishly that (I am ashamed to say it) I doubted her for a moment and remembered the fate of the poor Frenchman. Three times I said “ With you be peace ” and left her, but she followed me to the gate of the Haram, and I had to go back and speak to her and tell her that people were noticing her strange conduct. The last time I went back I led her to the opposite side of the Haram, and then said “ Good-bye ” and ran out of one of the near gates. As I passed out I looked out and saw her sitting down against one of the pillars and a number of children standing round looking at her. This was the last time I saw the “ Lady Venus.”

As soon as I reached our house and passed in through the outer door, I heard the “ first warrior ”

in the inner room protesting loudly that something was not at all "the cheese," and then met "Shaykh the Bow'sen," coming out, who told me he had brought a letter from the Amér recalling the "first warrior" and myself to go with him to Medinah. In half an hour more the letter would have been too late. The first thing I did was to run back to where I had left the "Lady Venus" to tell her what had happened and see if she could not help me. When I got to the place where I had last seen her she was gone. I looked out in the crowded street and could see nothing of her. What was I to do now? My chance of getting away knocked on the head at the last moment by the whim of a nigger! I was savage. A good rule for a man who smokes is, whenever bothered, take a pipe. I went across the street to a little coffee-shop, called for a chillam, and sat down to consider. At the third whiff I found myself laughing at my own awkward fix, and by the time I had finished my smoke I had fully decided to start that night for Jeddah and run with the donkeys. Arabs did it, and why should not I?—though I certainly was not in good form for fifty miles in twelve hours. I then went into the Haram and walked round the square and changed my mind. I should

like to see the tomb of Mohammed, I thought, and two months more of this would not kill me, and then I changed my mind again, felt how sick I was of it, and thought I had seen sights enough for one while. Jeddah or nowhere !

When I got to the gates of the Haram nearest to our house I took out my little bag, which I kept hung round my neck, to look at my money, one dollar four piastres : the sight of the dollar determined me. Bird for Jeddah—Christianity, cleanliness, and something to eat; cap for Medinah—the tomb of Mohammed and discomfort the worst. Up went the dollar—cap—there was no getting out of it. Oh ! twice out of three times, of course ; up again—bird. The people about must have thought me mad. I moved off a short distance, dropped my dollar on the pavement and picked it up—cap. Medinah it is.

And now, reader, I must take my leave of you for the present. The rest of my career in the Hejaz became one of such incredible adventure that I hesitate to publish an account of it ; but should the reception of my present effort encourage me to do so, I can promise to put before you a narrative of hairbreadth escapes and strange

incidents which appear marvellous even to me, who has lived a life of the wildest adventure from the age of twelve to twenty-five in every quarter of the globe.

CONCLUSION.

“THE LADY VENUS.”

I HAVE been withholding my MS. from the publisher for the last eight months in the hope of being able to add, in conclusion, the story of the “Lady Venus;” or, at least, to be able to assure the reader of her release. But I now find that there is no likelihood of her story ever being divulged, which is to be regretted, as it cannot but be one of intense interest.

She has had an opportunity of escape offered her, of which she has refused to take advantage; so that there seems nothing more to be done on her account, as I think the reader will see when I have shown him something of what has already been done for her.

On my return to England, in the winter of

1878, I told my story to a number of gentlemen who had been either long residents in India or were well-known travellers in the East, and through them the fact of an Englishwoman being in Meccah was brought to the notice of the Government authorities. The Foreign Office then sent instructions to their Consul at Jeddah to send a Mohammedan agent into Meccah and make inquiry for the supposed captive. The inquiry found my statements of her existence and locality correct; but she had left Meccah a short time previously for India, accompanying the family with whom she had been living in Meccah. As she was now no longer within the range of the Foreign Office (Consular), the India Office was moved to go on with the necessary inquiry, and with some difficulty the lady was traced in India and at last found.

Whether she is really an English lady, now unwilling under her sad and painful circumstances to disclose her real identity, is open to doubt. The English magistrate, whose lady had two hours' conversation with her, seems to have some suspicion of the truth of the story now told by her. And as I have been given an opportunity of reading

that gentleman's semi-official communication on the subject, I hope I shall not transgress in quoting the following from it :

"Semi-Official, from the Magistrate in whose District the lady was found, to the Foreign Office Authorities.

"I beg to say that I acted on your suggestion to continue my inquiries through my wife; but finding that the required interview was on one pretext or another put off, I sent for Mohammed —— myself on the twenty-third instant from D——, which is about twenty-four miles from the station, and he came next day. I at once told him what I had heard about an Englishwoman being under his protection, and if so I required an interview between her and my wife. He frankly admitted the fact, and while he said he knew nothing about her he made no objection whatever to bring her to the station and let my wife converse with her. Accordingly, nine o'clock last night was appointed, and the lady duly came to my bungalow, where my wife conversed with her in privacy for more than two hours.

"I enclose herewith the substance of her own story.

There is no reasonable doubt that this is the lady referred to by Mr. Keane; for except the material point (which she here denies) that she is an English-woman who was ravished from her friends during the Mutiny, forced to turn Mohammedan and marry her ravisher, all other details of Mr. Keane's description are found in her. And as I have carefully kept all the correspondence sealed and concealed from native view, it was utterly impossible for her to have been prompted in telling any set tale; and, moreover, as she conversed without reserve, no suspicion could arise as to the truth of her own story—except, perhaps, the main point, which she may be loath to divulge, and which certainly she positively denied to my wife.

"The facts referred to are these. She went to Meccah soon after the Mutiny. Her husband died there, or at Medinah, about seven or eight years ago. She supported herself at Meccah by doing small needlework. She was always known as an Englishwoman in Meccah. She speaks Hindi (i.e. Hindustani) and Arabic, and used to translate English letters for a native merchant. She is about forty years of age (probably nearer forty-five). She was

in straitened circumstances in Mecca. She appears to be an intelligent and educated Englishwoman. She lived in Mecca in the house of Mohammed ——. She had interviews with Europeans at Mecca. She was known in Mecca to be an Englishwoman turned Mohammedan.

"Finally, Mr. Keane's impression that 'she was certainly an European, though bronzed from long exposure,' he judging from a momentary view of her face when she raised her veil and shook hands at parting, is corroborated by my wife, who had a very long *tête-à-tête* with her in strict privacy, as she has the appearance of nothing so much as a reduced gentlewoman. In the face of her repeated and unreserved statement it is difficult if not impossible to believe that she is an Englishwoman, although fair enough to pass for one. And yet her English accent is hardly at all East-Indian, while her speech is so fluent and natural that it is not easy to suppose that she could ever have acquired English, which she seems to have learnt as her mother-tongue. Could I have had five minutes' conversation with her, I should probably have satisfied myself as to her race; but I had promised Mohammed —— that I would not see

her, and she herself shrank from seeing me, a suggestion which my wife made to her in order to settle the matter.

"Be she whoever she may, there is no doubt she is very well content where she is. She is under no restraint whatever, beyond such as is imposed on females of her creed and country (supposing she is, as she says, a native), and has nothing to complain of; has neither friends nor relations according to her own account, and is treated more as a companion than as a dependant by the members of Mohammed's family.

"My own impression is that her father (of whom she says she knows nothing, and about whom her mother would never disclose anything to her) may have been an Englishman, and her mother, as she says, a Kashmirin; that she was brought up to speak English from infancy until she became an adult, and that in a way which her own story does not account for; that, after the Mutiny, by some vicissitude of fortune over which a veil still hangs (her own story to the contrary notwithstanding) she was taken to Meccah, where she lived ever since till the beginning of this year.*

* 1879.

"It is only just to Mohammed to say that, barring his putting off my wife two or three times, for which probably the ladies of his family were more responsible than himself, he has given every assistance in his power. I believe, what he says, that he never conversed with the lady herself till I asked him to introduce her to my wife, and that all that he knew about her was that the Shahzadi, his stepmother, was a kind of patron of hers, and called her a Feringhi* in Meccah, and an Angrezin† in this country. Of course I have in no way intruded on the privacy of the family, the lady in question, according to mutual accounts, being no connection. But the fact that the lady was sent for alarmed the family, and only this morning Mohammed begged of me to take charge of the lady, whose residence with him would at any time, he thought, expose him to suspicion. I assured him that there was no occasion for any alarm, as he at least had done all that was required of him, and I requested him to let the lady live on with him as she had done for years past, which he consented to do for the present at least.

* Frank.

† Englishwoman.

"DESCRIPTION OF THE LADY.

"Complexion light olive, eyes of a light colour, middle height, medium size, hair short and thin, face slightly pitted with small-pox ; manner quiet and self-possessed ; general appearance that of a reduced gentlewoman ; speaks English remarkably well, with an accent slightly East-Indian ; reads and writes English and Arabic ; is said to speak Hindi with a foreign accent ; age about forty-five."

Either her present statement is true, or, as some think, after her sad and painful captivity and degradation of more than twenty years, and the uncertainty she may feel about finding a home and maintenance open to her, she prefers to remain in her present obscurity and seclusion. If not really English, it is difficult to account for her accurate knowledge of English—a language to which she has been a stranger for twenty years—her manner and appearance. At all events, I have fulfilled my promise made to her in Meccah.

THE END.



